

# IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

## Digital Repository

---

Graduate Theses and Dissertations

Iowa State University Capstones, Theses and  
Dissertations

---

2013

## Gender in the modernist city: shaping power relations and national identity with the construction of Brasilia

Larissa Pires  
*Iowa State University*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/etd>



Part of the [Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#), [Latin American History Commons](#), and the [Urban Studies and Planning Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Pires, Larissa, "Gender in the modernist city: shaping power relations and national identity with the construction of Brasilia" (2013).  
*Graduate Theses and Dissertations*. 13193.  
<https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/etd/13193>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Iowa State University Capstones, Theses and Dissertations at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact [digirep@iastate.edu](mailto:digirep@iastate.edu).

**Gender in the modernist city: shaping power relations and national  
identity with the construction of Brasilia**

by

**Larissa Oliveira Pires**

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

Major: History of Technology and Science

Program of Study Committee:

Amy S. Bix, Major Professor

David B. Wilson

Kimberly E. Zarecor

John W. Monroe

Timothy S. Wolters

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

2013

Copyright © Larissa Oliveira Pires, 2013. All rights reserved.

## DEDICATION

To Gabriela and Nathan.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION	ii
LIST OF FIGURES	v
LIST OF TABLES	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
ABSTRACT	viii
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2. HISTORIOGRAPHY AND BACKGROUND	17
Historiography	19
Brasilia and urban history	36
Gender studies as a backdrop	47
CHAPTER 3. CONTEXTUALIZING BRASILIA	54
Bosco: foundation myth	54
Brazil: from colony to empire	58
Brazilian Republicanism and Positivism	62
Brazil: 1930s	69
Vargas returns: 1950s	77
Juscelino Kubitschek	81
Brasilia: the promised capital	84
Brasilia: a project for Kubitschek	87
Opposition and support	90
CHAPTER 4. BRASILIA: NATIONALISM AND ARCHITECTURE	102

Le Corbusier and Modernist architecture	104
Modern architecture in Brazil	118
Brasilia, the modernist city	127
 CHAPTER 5. INEQUALITIES IN BRAZIL: RACE AND IMMIGRATION	 139
Race as a theoretical framework	140
Racial democracy and whitening	144
Race in the Northeast: <i>nordestino</i>	149
Migrants: Brasilia's working population	159
 CHAPTER 6. BRASILIA: INEQUALITIES IN THE FRONTIER	 165
Recruitment, work, and social organization	167
Nationalist discourse and inequality	179
Negotiating spaces through social mobilization	186
Malleable identities: <i>candangos</i> or <i>pioneiros</i> ?	201
Violence in the city	210
 CHAPTER 7. SHAPING GENDER ROLES IN BRASILIA	 224
Tradition and modernity in Brazil's gender relations	226
The development of Feminism in early 20 <sup>th</sup> Century Brazil	235
Female sexuality and the drive for sexual liberation	241
Women in Brasilia	261
Sex, masculinity, and violence in the frontier city	283
 CHAPTER 8. CONCLUSION	 308
REFERENCES	317

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Current map of Brazil	58
Figure 2	<i>American Financial World</i> Poster	98
Figure 3	Brasilia's Monumental Axis	133
Figure 4	Workers on their way to work	163
Figure 5	Map of planned and unplanned settlements	169
Figure 6	Identification post	171
Figure 7	Construction workers, or <i>Candangos</i>	203

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Non-white population in Brazil's two major regions	143
--	-----

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, I need to publicly acknowledge the role that God and faith played in this accomplishment. Through the long periods of self-doubt and through the often frustrating long days of research in which I could not see the end of this project, faith that somehow everything would work out is what kept me going. Faith that God was also giving me the strength to continue in spite of every setback was also crucial for the completion of this work.

I also want to thank my advisor Dr. Amy Bix who, through program changes, relocation, insecurities, and a constant bombardment of emails was always patiently by my side or “in my corner” as I like to say. With thoughtful suggestions, quick and efficient feedback, and general advice she helped me explore my topic and shape my discussion and analysis. She was nice, supportive, a mentor and a friend, and for that I am grateful.

I also want to thank Jennifer Rivera, who through this long academic journey served as administrative and emotional support. Unexpectedly, what was professional became personal, and she became forever a close friend.

I want to thank my parents, Alba and Helcio Pires, who are examples of resilience, intellectual curiosity, everlasting faith, and unending love. Without them and without their support I certainly would not be where I am now. Thank you and I hope I make you proud.

Finally, I need to thank my husband, Rafael Quirino for his emotional, personal, and physical support. His unwavering belief in me, and his willingness to step in and help out



with whatever was needed helped me prove that family life, maternity, and graduate school are not incompatible elements. For many weekends he played the “single-parent” role to our two children, while I hid in my office and wrote. For many nights he slept with our infant in order to help me rest for another day of research and dissertating. He is my partner, he is my rock, he is my fan, and he is my role model. Thank you. As for my children, our youngest is too young to remember, but I hope our daughter will look at my absences as a sign of perseverance and hard work. I did this for me, for my professional and personal ambitions, but I also did this for you, sweetheart. Thank you for inspiring me, and thank you for always welcoming me with a tight hug and a sweet kiss; it made everything ok.

## ABSTRACT

This study explores the period from 1956 to 1960, when Brazil officially relocated its political center from Rio de Janeiro to Brasilia. It examines the complex process of defining national identity for Brazilian citizens in a frontier city, within the framework of conflicting racial, social, and gender roles and expectations. Methodologically, this work is based on an extensive research of Brasilia's public records, newspapers, and oral-history interviews with some of the men and women who lived and worked in Brasilia. Most of the primary sources used are found in Brasilia's Public Archives.

Building on existing scholarship, this work expands into the field of gender studies and inequality, and illustrates the intricate ways that the frontier capital's social expectations intersected with pre-established gender roles to create a unique new context of identities. Within this setting, men and women from different racial, social, and regional backgrounds experienced the new urban space in often contrasting ways, with levels of equality, emancipation, and integration varying according to gender, race, and class. This study also argues for the continued existence of regional racism as a reality that complicated the rhetoric of modernization and the goal of shaping a progressive Brazilian national identity, as embodied in the construction of a new capital. It also uncovers the malleability of Brazilians' self-identification, and the importance of terminology in this process. In this sense, Brasilia's inhabitants during the 1950s described themselves as either *candangos* or *pioneiros*. This terminology lay at the heart of disputes over inequalities, since each term carried different social and racial values. Finally, this work explores the universe of gender

roles and expectations by unveiling how masculinity and femininity were exercised differently in Brasilia, and how conflicting gender manifestations both reinforced and challenged traditional patriarchy, according to social and racial categorizations.

## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

If you are ever going to build more capital cities, invite me to go, and I will!

It was a wonderful experience. It was great to arrive here, to look around at this vast, empty wilderness and then today see this wonder that is Brasilia.<sup>1</sup>

This delighted reminiscence from Brazilian worker Georgina Camara of the thrill she felt upon arriving in Brasilia in 1958 illustrates a sense of the city that many visitors still feel today. Travelers to Brasilia often feel the unnerving sensation of having landed in a distant land, a foreign and even alien country. The city's architecture bears no resemblance to the country's traditional colonial architectural style. Likewise, it does not possess the dizzying verticality of other Brazilian metropolitan centers. As the seat of Brazil's political power, it is unquestionably a modern capital, but does not evoke the majesty and magnitude of traditional capital cities in other countries that feature elaborate monuments and symbols. Instead, Brasilia's monumentality lies in its clear and horizontal lines, its connection with the blue horizon, and the buildings' sharp contrast of modernist angles and lines with daring curvature. The city impresses not only with its architecture, but also with the fact that it was created from scratch, in the middle of Brazil's open *cerrado*, or plateau, in the record breaking time frame of only four years. With all this, Brasilia's past, present, and future truly deserve attention.

---

<sup>1</sup>Testimony of Georgina Camara who arrived in Brasilia in 1958. Cited in Mourao, Tania Fontenele; Oliveira, Monica Ferreira Gaspar de. *Poeira e Batom no Planalto Central. 50 Mulheres na Construcao de Brasilia*. Athalaia Grafica e Editora, 2010, p. 81. All translations from Portuguese to English from this source by the author.

On December 7, 1987, Brasilia was inscribed in the World Heritage List, a compilation by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) of international sites deemed to hold outstanding universal values as symbols of specific cultures and artistic or intellectual production.<sup>2</sup> The honor given to Brasilia reflected its importance as a landmark in the history of urban planning and innovative modernist architecture. Historians of urban life and architecture have justly focused on the city's functional layout and modern design, and the noteworthy purity of its buildings' forms, rectilinear façade, and unique curved surfaces. However, behind the new capital's distinct layout and innovative design lies the history of its rapid creation, a complex story of survival, nationalism, and inequality. What official and social mandates were required to build a new capital out of a wilderness in just four years? How did the country mobilize public enthusiasm, money, and especially people for this enormous effort? How did pre-existing issues of geography, class, race, and gender affect and complicate life for the tens of thousands of men and women who traveled hundreds of miles to come live and work in this new setting? Historians and other academics so far have generally overlooked these vital human and social elements behind the construction of Brasilia.

Rio de Janeiro had served as the coastal capital of Brazil since 1793, but in the nineteenth century, an existing campaign to create a new city located toward the country's interior gained momentum.<sup>3</sup> Advocates felt that relocating the capital would encourage national economic development while symbolizing modernization. Finally, after more than a century of political debate, the development of Brasilia began in 1956, with the

---

<sup>2</sup> <http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/402> accessed on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Katinsky, Julio. Xavier, Alberto. *Brasilia, Antologia Critica*. Cosac Naify, 2012.

construction of the first presidential palace, and official government headquarters: *Palacio do Catetinho*.<sup>4</sup> This edifice, essentially built of wood, functioned as temporary lodging for the President and other government officials, architects and engineers, and also foreign dignitaries visiting the site of Brazil's future capital. Despite its simplistic design resembling a shoe box on stilts, the opening of this new palace marked the beginning of the city's construction. After four years of intense production, the city's main elements and layout were ready for the chosen inaugural date of April 21, 1960. By holding the official city opening ceremony on that date, President Juscelino Kubitschek was able to fulfill his desire to inaugurate the new capital during his presidential mandate, which ended in the following year.<sup>5</sup>

This historical study explores what historians have defined as Brasilia's construction years, the period ranging from 1956 to 1960, when Brazil officially relocated its political center from Rio de Janeiro to the new city. My approach unveils the cultural disputes and prejudice hidden behind the modernist façade and behind the nationalist discourse of nation building that surrounded the development of a new capital. It examines the complex process of defining national identity for Brazilian citizens in a frontier city, within the framework of conflicting racial, social, and gender roles and expectations.

Architectural historians have written a lot about Brasilia's architectural components and designs, with special attention to its unique modernism and urban layout. Historians and anthropologists have examined the social implications of Brasilia's urban planning and architecture. While those contributions are crucial to the field of urban Latin American

---

<sup>4</sup> Tamanini, L. *Brasília : memória da construção*. 2nd ed. Brasília DF: Projecto Editorial, 2003, vol 1.

<sup>5</sup> Katinsky, Julio. Xavier, Alberto. *Brasilia, Antologia Critica*. Cosac Naify, 2012.

history, they do not fully dissect the social intricacies of how power was manifested in the new postwar city, and of how unequal relations shaped national identity in such an important moment in Brazilian history. This is precisely the focus of my research.

In my analysis of how the community of newly-arriving workers, technocrats, and government officials functioned during that early period of urban construction, I have relied extensively on Brazilian public records, newspapers, and oral-history interviews with some of the men and women who lived and worked in Brasilia. When I visited the *Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal*, or Public Archives of the Federal District, where most of the historical documentation regarding Brasilia is located, I was pleasantly surprised to find that the government had launched a thorough project of historical remembrance to celebrate the city's fiftieth anniversary. The project, called *Memórias de Brasília*, or "Memories of Brasilia," included the digitalization of more than ten thousand documents produced from 1956 to 1960, including newspaper articles, personal letters, architectural plans, and photographs taken during that construction period. It also included the transcripts and digitalization of more than four hundred interviews with government officials and common people who directly or indirectly participated in Brasilia's construction.

Intrigued, I focused on the interviews with the workers. I soon realized that even though official documentation regarding tensions and violence in Brasilia was not as accessible as other information, memories survived and persisted with the many men and women who built Brasilia. In oral history interviews, these Brazilians were eager to talk about the challenges, joys, and fears they experienced while living in the new city. In the end, the vast collection of accessible material organized by the Public Archives of Brasilia

helped me explore in detail how, when, and why thousands of men and women moved to the new capital under construction.

In my research, I explain how the modern city environment shaped both opportunities and limits for people of different races and classes, and how some men and women became activists who secured new rights within an emerging city culture. First, I explore how the 1950s Brazilian government made extensive use of propaganda and nationalist discourse to gain support for the project of relocating the nation's capital, and to attract the thousands of necessary construction workers. By arguing for greater territorial unification and social integration, President Juscelino Kubitschek gained both supporters and enough manual labor to finish building the city in just four years, as his presidential campaign had promised.

The individual and group histories of the many workers who migrated to the city during these construction years form the core of my research. By examining their expectations, realizations, frustrations, and daily experiences, my work highlights the contradiction between the political promise of national integration and the extent to which life in Brasilia revealed and even exacerbated class, race, gender, and geographic tensions. In particular, city leaders attracted men to move to Brasilia to help with its physical construction, while assuming that after the city's inauguration, those manual laborers would return to their homes in distant regions. Other researchers have noted how the state attempted to take away residential rights from this poor class of construction workers, but have not connected this story to the broader context of the history of race, class, gender, and geography in Brazil. My evidence builds up this link, the role of traditional racial and social



preconceptions as primordial elements of prejudice, justifying authorities' plans to deny permanent residential rights for the working-class in the brand-new modern capital.

While evaluating oral histories from Brasilia, I soon realized that traditional prejudices were themselves complicated, extending beyond a simple racial discrimination based on Brazil's black and white continuum. Over a number of years, Brazilians had built up a set of popular stereotypes to describe different sets of people, based on the country's geography and economy. Specifically, prejudices painted immigrants from the country's northeastern interior region as more undeveloped and backwards than their counterparts who moved to Brasilia from the coast. Such regional biases ultimately proved as important as strict racial, class, and gender lines in shaping the new city's social, economic, and political life.

Therefore, my study argues for the continued existence of regional racism as a reality that complicated the rhetoric of modernization and the goal of shaping a progressive Brazilian national identity, as embodied in the construction of a new capital city. In this sense, migrants themselves helped transport old and traditional prejudices to Brasilia. Certain segments of the new city's population used those biases to justify government decisions granting rights to some instead of others. More powerful people used financial and political power to legitimize their demands for residential rights, while claiming that others lacking financial and political influence were not entitled to the same rights.

In analyzing the fight over who had the legal right to reside in the new capital, I also uncovered the complexity and malleability of Brazilians' self-identification, and the importance of language and terminology in this process. The men and women who lived in

Brasilia during the 1950s tended to describe themselves as either a *candango* or *pioneiro* (pioneer). The choice of word lay at the heart of disputes over inequalities, since each term carried different social values. The term *candango* generally had a derogatory essence, referring to the low-brow construction workers, the unwanted masses who tended to come from poor villages in the northern interior. By contrast, the word “pioneer” was meant to reflect the nationalist idealism attached to Brazil’s modern heroes who facilitated the capital’s relocation, the higher ranking engineers, civil servants, and entrepreneurs who generally came from more wealthy coastal regions. Old regional and class prejudices legitimized these so-called *pioneiros*’ claims to the city, while denying residential rights to the poor construction workers, the *candangos*.

Since terminologies of identity are highly malleable and often reflect social constructs, the terms’ meanings varied throughout Brasilia’s construction years. Initially the government used the rhetoric of nationalism and masculine bravado to add honor to the term *candango* and thus attract the thousands of skilled and unskilled laborers that were required for the construction of a new city within the timeframe of four years. Hence, especially in the beginning of the construction period, the term *candango* carried both a gendered meaning that reflected traditional masculine roles, and a nationalist pride in building a more modern Brazil. With time and as the inauguration date approached, other inhabitants of the new city under construction, in this case mostly workers of other areas who generally had better financial means, rejected the term and labeled it as derogatory, thus consolidating their regional, racial, and class prejudices within the scope of terminology and identity.

My research further illustrates the complexity of Brazilian social history by assessing the role of gender on top of complex factors of class, race, and geographic prejudices in the construction of Brasilia. I explore the relationship of women to the state, and their place and claims within the new constructed city. Brasilia, during its construction years, represented an untamed frontier and, as such, remained a highly masculine space. The few women who chose to migrate to the city found themselves in a curious position. The literal and social openness of the city under construction offered a new space that was relatively free from traditional social and cultural restraints. That freedom contrasted strongly to women's traditional lives in their home regions, where fathers and husbands kept wives and daughters within strict boundaries of domestic life. But in the new city of Brasilia, women had to figure out how to negotiate their place within a violent and masculine environment.

Politicians' rhetoric promoting the construction of Brasilia as the country's defining step toward modernization struck a chord with women as well as men. Many women who moved to the city in the 1950s later recalled their excitement at the sheer opportunity of participating in such a novel moment of Brazil's history. For women of all backgrounds, moving to Brasilia offered them a sense of greater inclusion in the body politic, and gave them a stronger feeling of nationalism and civil rights, whether real or merely illusory. Within this framework, race, class, and geographic origin made the crucial difference again. For those women originally belonging to the upper class and considered "white", that privileged racial and social identity gave them greater protection and rights within the frontier space. As the wives and daughters of the so-called male "pioneers", these women could claim a role in helping build the future capital's social structure and community. On

the other hand, women belonging to the lower classes and to non-white racial categories were relegated to more dangerous positions, and they often had to justify their presence in the city.

The official vision of the capital made little room for these poor women; authorities did not see the wives and daughters of lower-class *candangos* as vital in any way to life in a modern city. The government used nationalist discourse to attract construction workers to Brasilia and played up the rhetoric of *candango* spirit, an image that had strong masculine elements. Since the original plan was to have male laborers migrate to Brasilia to build the city, and then leave once they had completed construction, city planners did not leave room for their wives and families to migrate with them. Furthermore, by specifically limiting free lodging in the construction camps to male workers, the government ensured that Brasilia remained a highly masculine space. Leaders hoped that the lack of family ties within the new city's social space would discourage lower-class men from making any plans for permanent settlement. In this sense, Brasilia during its construction years was a highly gendered frontier space, literally built on government rhetoric and nationalist discourse that was also laden with gender representations and prejudice. While authorities later tried to deny *candango* men any permanent legal rights to the city, the lower class women who insisted in either following their partners or in migrating in search of a better life had even less right to belong.

Men also experienced life in the frontier city according to their traditional gender identities and expectations. Differently from their female counterparts, men did not face the contradiction between the freedom of a frontier society, and pre-established traditions.

Instead, they reproduced and reinforced traditional roles of masculinity, which included sexual permissiveness, the search for comfortable marriages or consensual unions, and the manifestations of power through sexual violence and street fights.

Ultimately, I argue that regional racism in the tension behind the *candango* versus *pioneiro* identity had a lasting effect on political, social, and cultural life of Brasilia. In particular, racial and social biases against workers who came from the nation's interior undermined that group's claims to continue living in the new city once construction was done. Added to the conflicting relations of gender roles and rights within the space of the future capital city the history of Brasilia's construction proves to be a story of conflicting social, gender, and political interests, masked by the rhetoric of integration and by the pride in national construction.

The theoretical framework outlining my research examines how historians and other scholars have evaluated considerations of race, class, and gender in Brazil over the years. The first major academic studies came in the 1930s, with publication of the work *The Masters and the Slaves*, by Brazilian anthropologist Gilberto Freyre.<sup>6</sup> He argued that while Brazil's colonial past had been characterized by slave trade and European immigration, the country had become a "racial democracy" by the twentieth century, a culture that was racially tolerant. A second school of thought emerged before and just after World War II, with scholars who contended that in Brazil, class categorizations generally outweighed racial considerations when it came to determining an individual's position in society. A third major group of scholars emerged during the 1950s, who said that while Brazilian society

---

<sup>6</sup> Freyre, Gilberto. *The Masters and the Slaves: a Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization*. University of California Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1987.

was still driven by a racial continuum, those discriminatory preconceptions were merely residual tendencies lingering from years of slavery tradition.<sup>7</sup>

More recently, historians have interpreted racial discrimination in twentieth century Brazil as a new phenomenon separate from the country's pre-abolition structure. In other words, some suggest that racism grew as part of the evolution of Brazil's political and social structure and cannot merely be explained as a consequence of the slave trade. Instead, racially discriminatory practices are products of a competitive system that pitches whites and non-whites against each other, thus race also becomes a form of social subjugation.<sup>8</sup> Because of the uneven geographic distribution of whites and non-whites in Brazil, race also became a crucial element of regional identification, especially when considering Brazil's Northeastern region. Illustrating this, a national report on regional population concentration from 1950 to 1976 showed that approximately 50% of Brazil's non-white population resided in the country's Northeast, as compared to 18% in the country's southeastern region, where Rio de Janeiro, the country's former capital, is located.<sup>9</sup> This fact helps explain the strong racial component present in the different geographic identities of the migrant men and women who built Brasilia in the 1950s. Ultimately, my analysis is based on the assumption that racism in Brazil is, in fact, a force separate from class, and that it is more evident than society, and scholars, previously assumed. I also defend the argument that regional racism plays an important role in the construction of identities and social hierarchy, and categories

---

<sup>7</sup> Skidmore, Thomas E. *Black into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought*. Duke University Press, 1993.

<sup>8</sup> Hasenbalg, Carlos. "Race and socioeconomic inequalities in Brazil: historical perspectives". In *Race, Class, and Power in Brazil*. Edited by Pierre-Michel Fontaine, Center for Afro-American Studies, University of California, 1985.

<sup>9</sup> Average based on data cited in Hasenbalg, Carlos. "Race and socioeconomic inequalities in Brazil: historical perspectives". In *Race, Class, and Power in Brazil*. Edited by Pierre-Michel Fontaine, Center for Afro-American Studies, University of California, 1985, p. 29.

such as *nordestinos*, which refers to those born in the country's northeastern region, may also lead to the manifestation of racial discrimination.<sup>10</sup>

Gender is another component of inequality, and historians, sociologists, and anthropologists dealing with gender hierarchies and identities in Latin America often focus on the three main elements of sexuality, masculinity, and political and labor rights. Most research on the topic tends to concentrate on one specific area, such as feminism and political manifestations within the industrial workforce, or the quest for sexual and political emancipation. However, the study of gender relations in Brasilia during its construction years offers the rare opportunity of observing how pre-established roles and relationships were transported to a new social setting and, with the promise of personal growth and national integration, were adjusted to reinforce Brazil's patriarchal structure. Therefore I argue that the men and women migrating to Brasilia experienced gender inequality and authority differently. Likewise, due to diverse regional, cultural, social, and even racial backgrounds, residents of the new city manifested femininity and masculinity in ways that reinforced paternalistic authority. In this sense, for instance, young women from Brazil's middle and upper classes who arrived alone in Brasilia were allowed greater moral and sexual freedom than their poor equivalents. However, among the more well-off young women, family ties still restricted this relative empowerment and liberty, and girls who were taken to Brasilia by their parents were relegated to more traditional sexual and moral expectations.

---

<sup>10</sup> This argument is also supported by the following authors and their works: Blake, Stanley E. *The Vigorous Core of Our Nationality: Race and Regional Identity in Northeastern Brazil*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011. Levine, Robert M. *Vale of Tears: Revisiting the Canudos Massacre in Northeastern Brazil, 1893-1897*. University of California Press, 1995. Santos, Martha S. *Cleansing Honor with Blood. Masculinity, Violence, and Power in the Backlands of Northeast Brazil, 1845-1889*. Stanford University Press, 2012.

To support my arguments and clarify my deduction process, I have divided this study into eight chapters, with a final conclusion summarizing the work's major points and contributions, and Chapter 1 serving as the work's introduction. Because this research is interdisciplinary, Chapter 2 introduces the reader to a historiographical examination of important works in the fields of urban history, architectural history, sociology, and gender studies that are relevant to the study's topic. By pointing out the major publications in the different fields, I hope to assist the reader in understanding how the subject evolved, and how interpretation of crucial topics such as modernist architecture, gender roles, and nationalism evolved in the academic milieu. My analysis draws on both American and Brazilian scholars and publications to further show the topic's validity in the international academic sphere.

Following this historiographical presentation, Chapter 3 introduces the reader to Brazil's historical background in order to facilitate a complete understanding of the country's political, economic, and social construct at the time. By explaining how politics and the state evolved in Brazil during the twentieth century, with special consideration given to the 1930s government of Getulio Vargas and 1950s government of Juscelino Kubitschek, I frame my research within a historical context. This chapter also presents the evolution of the debate regarding the relocation of Brazil's capital, and discusses the main characters, challenges, and motivations behind the project.

After understanding Brazil's historical background, the reader moves to Chapter 4, which covers the history of modernist architecture. Its discussion includes a closer look at Swiss architect Le Corbusier, considered the central figure in the original development of



architectural modernism and its formal organization, the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne - CIAM. This chapter highlights Corbusian style, construction trends, and the connection that Le Corbusier had with Brazil's modernist architects. This partnership ultimately shaped the development of Brazil's unique version of architectural modernism. The city of Brasilia's physical shape and social assumptions both emerged from the relationship between the architect responsible for the construction of Brasilia (Oscar Niemeyer, a follower of Le Corbusier) and urban planner Lucio Costa. For this reason, it is essential to understand the goals of modernist architecture as professed by Le Corbusier, and the influence he exerted on his Brazilian counterparts, in order to see how the construction of Brasilia came to represent a high-stakes promise of national development and modernity.

Chapters 5 and 6 move the reader into an analysis of social and racial inequalities, discussing concepts of race, power, identity, and the social elements behind Brasilia's construction. Chapter 5 offers an overview of Brazil's racial distribution, along with a close examination of the migratory waves that composed the body of workers responsible for building the new capital. The chapter also discusses the *nordestino*, or northeasterner identity as a racial category, to illustrate how such regional considerations underlined racism in Brasilia. Chapter 6 centers on the nationalist discourse that hid old prejudices and that engendered new perceptions of social and racial inequalities. This shows how the malleable identities of *candangos* and *pioneiros* underlined preexisting racial and class biases. By examining the testimonies of laborers who migrated to Brasilia to work on its construction, the contradiction between promised national integration and actual social exclusion becomes evident. The chapter also analyzes how different social categories negotiated their place in

the new urban space of Brasilia according to their interests, powers, and overall place in Brazilian society. Ending on a rather somber note, the chapter explores the topic of institutionalized violence in the city in the form of the 1958 Pacheco Fernandes Massacre. While many aspects of that event remain shrouded in mystery, its history sheds light on the ways in which authorities mistreated, scorned, and victimized lower class workers during the capital's construction.

Finally, Chapter 7 brings the reader to the complex setting of contradictory gender roles and expectations within the frontier space of Brasilia during its construction years. Women of different social classes, regional origin, and racial stock experienced the emerging city in different ways that often tended to highlighted traditional female roles in Brazilian society. However, since the new city was still somewhat detached from traditional urban centers, many women also found ways of participating more freely in its economic and social construction. While in later reminiscences, many early women residents of Brasilia recalled positive experiences, some also remembered their vulnerable situation within the scope of a frontier, and highly masculine, space.

In terms of the city's masculinity, the chapter also examines how government rhetoric employed gender classifications and roles, especially through the use of propaganda that highlighted the masculine element of the northeastern migrant specifically, and of the *candango*, or construction worker, more broadly. From the very beginning, Brasilia was portrayed as a masculine environment, a perception that gradually changed in the post-inauguration period, and this conceptualization helped the government's plan of limiting access to the city for unwanted social elements. Despite the countless challenges, many

women migrated to Brasilia motivated by a sense of nationalism, adventure, and financial opportunity similar to that of their male counterparts. These first female migrants offered crucial services that complemented the roles and activities of construction workers, such as informal health services and later education. To date, there is little academic analysis of the history of female workers in Brasilia, so this work opens new space to assess gender roles and expectations in the frontier space of Brazil's modernist city. Whether their presence was desired or undesired, the truth is that women and men of all classes, races, and origins built Brasilia, and the stories of their challenges and conflicts deserve to be told. On balance, women's indirect participation in Brasilia's construction helped them gain more rights and respectability within Brazilian society, especially for women of the middle and upper classes, though true gains in gender equality did not come until after the new capital's inaugural period.

Ultimately, this study sheds new light on the inequalities behind the construction of Brasilia. As impressive as it was for a country to complete an architecturally stunning new capital in just four years, that accomplishment should not mask the true prejudices that were present in Brazilian society then, and that mostly remain in Brazil today. Tensions of race, class, gender, and region remain strong, deeply rooted in everyday Brazilian history, as this research shows.

## CHAPTER 2. HISTORIOGRAPHY AND BACKGROUND

I came directly from Ouro Preto to Brasilia. What a dramatic journey through time and history! A journey from yesterday to tomorrow, from what is finished to what is about to begin, from old fulfillment to new promise!<sup>11</sup>

These words, quickly jotted down on a napkin by Aldous Huxley on August 16<sup>th</sup>, 1958, portray the impact the vision of Brasilia had on the many visitors that either flew or drove to the city to see its construction. The writer, on a tour of Brazil, was amazed at the sight of Modernist buildings emerging from the red and dusty soil of the Brazilian *cerrado*, or backlands. It was certainly a futuristic vision, and his words adequately captured the essence of the new capital's premise: awe, and promise.

Since its inauguration in 1960, Brasilia has become the subject of many academic inquiries. Most early scholars concentrated on analyzing the city's architectural style and its existence within a particular stage of Brazilian politics. The first books and articles published internationally on this topic focused mainly on describing the uniqueness of the city, narrating through the eyes of visitors who attempted to translate such a seemingly foreign urban setting into a more comprehensible construct. Many simply recounted the narrative of the construction, describing how exotic and tropical Brazil had built the city of the future. Other observers, from a more critical perspective, pointed to the incongruity of an undeveloped country spending so much on such an ambitious project.

---

<sup>11</sup> Tamanini, L. *Brasília : memória da construção*. 2nd ed. Brasília DF: Projecto Editorial, 2003, vol 1, p. 13.

Brasilia remained a topic of discussion in American academia throughout the sixties, but by the 1970s, was quickly overshadowed by other pressing international matters, namely events related to the Cold War. At this point, military dictatorship within Brazil, and new increasing tensions in the international scenario, relegated Brasilia to oblivion. As author Valerie Fraser points out, “Brasilia soon came to be seen not as an outstanding achievement, but as an outrageously ambitious project for a country like Brazil...and once the joke had worn off, amnesia set in. Latin American modernist architecture, having been dismissed as puerile, exotic, irrelevant, or simply wrong, then simply disappeared off the map of architectural history altogether.”<sup>12</sup>

A couple of decades later, scholars (particularly in the United States) began to revisit Brasilia as a subject of academic interest. The main catalyst of this new trend may have been the 1989 publication of *The Modernist City*, by anthropologist James Holston.<sup>13</sup> Subsequently, studies of Modernist architecture, architectural and urban history, and even ethnographies started to reexamine Brasilia. However, research will still repay further inquiries into the delicate complexities of not only the city as it exists today, but also of its social and cultural fabric during the construction years.

---

<sup>12</sup>Fraser, Valerie. *Building the New World: Modern Architecture in Latin America*. Verso, 2001,p. 255.

<sup>13</sup> Holston, James. *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. 1st ed. University Of Chicago Press, 1989.

## Historiography

One of the first international articles published about Brasilia came in 1962, by Sir William Holford, who narrated the origin of the plan for the transfer of Brazil's capital from Rio de Janeiro to a site in the country's interior. Holford also offered a technical explanation of how the construction process was organized, planned, and executed, but said little about social implications of the city's original design. His article concludes with the salutary note that "for good or ill, Brasilia has come into the world as a prodigy."<sup>14</sup> Despite the article's simplistic structure and goals, its value remains as one of the first academic writings on a subject that was previously restricted to the realm of newspaper clippings and magazine editorials. A 1964 economic geography article by David E. Snyder reintroduced readers to the topic of Brasilia's recent history, but offered questions about the social pressures and interactions that Snyder saw as already indicating possible future complications for the new capital. This important turning point in the subject's historiography indicates that outside observers saw apparent social conflicts in Brasilia that the Brazilian government proved reluctant to acknowledge.

In a 1970 article titled, "Two Newly-Created Capitals," Glenn Stephenson compared Islamabad and Brasilia.<sup>15</sup> He portrayed both cities as the final products of a nationalistic discourse that promoted territorial centralization and shifted power from traditional urban sites to lesser developed locales. Stephenson's comparative study in urban history added a new dimension to the study of Brasilia, placing its construction within a broader political

---

<sup>14</sup>Holford, William. "Brasília: The Federal Capital of Brazil." *The Geographical Journal* 128, no. 1 (March 1, 1962): p. 17.

<sup>15</sup> Stephenson, Glenn. "Two Newly-Created Capitals: Islamabad and Brasilia." *The Town Planning Review*. Vol. 41, No. 4 (Oct., 1970), pp. 317-332.

frame that transformed the country's history. Although Stephenson did not focus much on the social implications of forging a new and artificial urban space, his work added in-depth political analysis, framing the city's development within the scope of nationalism and a wider political agenda.

In 1973, David Epstein published one of the first books centered solely on the subject of Brasilia, a unique attempt to portray the city as an interesting setting for social interactions and clashes.<sup>16</sup> Epstein introduced the reader to an anthropological and ethnographic study of a society that had been forged through the mixing of different cultures, in a very short period of time. Epstein moved into and lived in one of the many unplanned shantytowns that surrounded the capital. Through his daily contact with local inhabitants, he was able to detect the subtleties of identity crisis, and of class conflicts, that permeated *Brasiliense* society. Epstein's book raised the question of precisely how integrated and how *Brasiliense* were those peripheral communities; although these areas weren't legitimately incorporated into the city's original plans, their inhabitants viewed themselves as a crucial part of Brasilia's construction and existence.

While examining how such local communities navigated the strict, planned spheres of Brasilia's society, Epstein contended that Brazilian slums, or *favelas*, especially those that arose during and after the construction of the new capital, were in fact integral components of *Brasiliense* identity, rather than separate elements. He further argued that Brasilia, and the many problems stemming from its construction, reflected the conditions and ailments that most of the country faced, such as the trend of nuclear-periphery dependency.

---

<sup>16</sup> Epstein, David G. *Brasilia: Plan and Reality*. University of California Press, 1973.

Furthermore, the plan's monumentalism, its focus on automotive transportation, and the sheer speed in which the city was built all followed the pattern of what he called a "public works complex," in which Brazil's political elite tended to focus on immediate results, building impressive schools, roads, and other impressive structures called *obras*,<sup>17</sup> without much long-term planning.

For historians, Epstein's book shifted focus from an architecture-oriented examination of Brasilia, to one primarily concerned with social stratification, organization, and negotiation of identities and roles within such a planned space. His work looked at the masses and the squatters, and emphasized the idea that "the squatter, as well as the university-trained planner and the politician, is an actor in the making of history – even if his or her activity follows the prescriptions of no preconceived ideology."<sup>18</sup> This insightful observation shaped the following publications on Brasilia, and remains at the core of current historical examinations of the subject.

Also in 1973, Norma Evenson published *Two Brazilian Capitals*, in which she compared and addressed the many problems that affected Rio de Janeiro and Brasilia.<sup>19</sup> This work helped readers envision the differences between the old and the new capitals, and comprehend the reasons for the resistance to the transfer from *cariocas*,<sup>20</sup> Rio natives. Evenson pinpointed the pride of those city residents in their relationship with their city,

---

<sup>17</sup>The term refers to public works, and symbolizes Brazil's political trend of focusing on the construction of grand structures (from functional buildings such as hospitals and schools to bridges, roads, and even soccer stadiums). In this context, politicians would later be remembered by, and base their future political career on, those achievements, most of which are short-term projects financed by public money. The downside is that most projects aren't connected to long-term plans, and eventually lead to accusation of corruption and financial scams.

<sup>18</sup>Epstein, David G. *Brasilia: Plan and Reality*. University of California Press, 1973. p. 177.

<sup>19</sup> Evenson, Norma. *Two Brazilian Capitals: Architecture and Urbanism in Rio de Janeiro and Brasilia*. Yale University Press, New Haven, 1973.

<sup>20</sup>Term referring to those born or raised in Rio de Janeiro.



tightly woven into a connection with the natural surroundings of Rio de Janeiro. She also detected the population's strong sense of belonging to a historically traditional and tight community, a powerful affection towards the city that stemmed from years of cultural and historical development, as opposed to Brasilia's forged national appeal and quickly-constructed identity. Evenson also noted how European intellectual and artistic influences shaped Rio's architecture and social elite, despite the apparent contradiction between a Haussmannian<sup>21</sup> influence in urban design and local resistance to strict urban planning. Indeed, most of Rio's elite rejected the mere proposal of a rigid urban design, considering such a structure and planning to be artificial.

When addressing the issue of Brasilia's construction, Evenson strongly emphasized the power of a planned architecture over pragmatism. She argued that while possibly being entranced by their ideological views, urban planners such as Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer failed to predict the social shortcomings that might develop from their planned structure. Her picture suggested that the *favelas* of Brasilia were not a novelty in Brazilian urban development; rather, those slums represented the human tendency towards resistance and survival when faced with strong governmental, or even architectural, impositions. However, her work delved less into the social conflicts and contradictions of the created city that Epstein passionately discussed.

Then in 1989, James Holston published what remains the single most comprehensive and insightful work on Brasilia. *The Modernist City* covers the technical aspect of the history of the capital's construction (from the different architectural designs and plans, to the

---

<sup>21</sup> For more on the urban transformations of Paris see Jordan, David P. *Transforming Paris: The Life and Labors of Baron Haussmann*. University of Chicago Press, 1996.

actual organization of the city's urban zones), the historic development of the idea of transferring the nation's capital, the political discourse behind the construction, and the plan's effects on urban social structure. This work offered a deeply analytical examination of a byproduct of the Brazilian Modernist architectural movement which Holston described as focused on disrupting the established bourgeois discourse, defamiliarizing, deconstructing, and disorienting "the normative, moral, aesthetic, and familiar categories of social life."<sup>22</sup> Ironically, those goals failed and, as Brasilia's history indicates, the outcome was the strengthening of the very elements that the urban plan wanted to destroy. Holston concluded that "one of the social effects of modernist master planning is the depoliticization of those who are not planners, since their political organization becomes irrelevant, if not obstructive, in decisions about urban development."<sup>23</sup> In the case of the new capital, that trend reinforced the marginalization of the *candangos*, magnifying the disparity between them and the political and technical elites. In summary, Holston analyzed the construction of Brasilia through the Modernist lens in order to understand the development of its political and social orders. He identified the many social, economic, cultural, and political conditions under which the city had been proposed, planned, and executed.

Although they did not focus primarily on Brasilia alone, other scholars have also discussed the construction of Brasilia, and the many problems derived from it. Some works were concerned mainly with discussing Brazilian Modernism and Oscar Niemeyer, others concentrated on the political and social implications of structured urban, and governmental planning. For example, in the 1994 book *Oscar Niemeyer and Brazilian Free-Form*

---

<sup>22</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. 1st ed. University Of Chicago Press, 1989, P.6.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid, p. 8.

*Modernism*, David Underwood sought to challenge the perception of Niemeyer's contribution to modern architecture as merely a formalistic one.<sup>24</sup> Instead, Underwood argued that modern architecture in Brazil, albeit broadly influenced by European tendencies and by Le Corbusier specifically, was in reality a peculiar adaptation of styles from the "old continent" to tropical surroundings, and to the country's history, culture, and past aesthetics (namely Baroque). This free-form modernism also stemmed from the celebration of the natural curves of Brazilian topography (and women)<sup>25</sup> and from the rejection of the rigid rectilinearity of the International Style.

On the specific topic of Brasilia, Underwood described the construction project as a paradox of "increased formal discipline and concurrent achievement of a free space for the imagination based on the revolt against structural orthodoxies."<sup>26</sup> This statement refers both to the formal building style, and to the ideological discourse behind the city's designs and plans. Rather than untangling the implications of artificial urban growth spurred by a strict architectural design, Underwood focused on recognizing the tangible contributions of a Latin American architect who, in his view, has been commonly misinterpreted or even underestimated.

Another important academic work that assesses Brasilia as a symbol of Latin American modernism is 2001's *Building the New World*, in which Valerie Fraser looks at how Modernist architecture in Latin America developed not as a mere branch of European

---

<sup>24</sup> Underwood, David. *Oscar Niemeyer and Brazilian Free-Form Modernism*. 1st ed. George Braziller, 1994.

<sup>25</sup> Underwood uses Niemeyer's statements to support this argument, including the architect's interviews in which he directly linked his free-style designs and curves to those of Brazilian women.

<sup>26</sup> Underwood, David. *Oscar Niemeyer and Brazilian Free-Form Modernism*. 1st ed. George Braziller, 1994, p. 71.

architectural schools, but as a significant and unique regional development.<sup>27</sup> Instead of depending on influence from foreign specialists and ideologies, Latin modernism reflected local interests, tendencies, and intellectual abilities. While analyzing how architectural modernism developed and progressed in different Latin American countries, Fraser also turns her attention to the connection between architectural tendencies and modernizing governments, such as that of Getulio Vargas in Brazil. It was during Vargas' administration that political national discourse was aligned with technological and intellectual expertise to create a new, and modern, country. This discourse of national growth later permeated Juscelino Kubitschek's administration, and allowed for the consolidation of this imagery in the construction of the new capital.

In discussing the social implications of Niemeyer and Costa's urban plan, Fraser's treatment resonates with the main themes that Holston had previously addressed. Both authors acknowledge that Brasilia's master plan included public officials, not construction workers, a flaw that would later prove to be dangerous to the city's original structure. Slums inevitably appeared, and *Brasiliense* society became further, and greatly, stratified. Fraser also discusses, although briefly, how Brazilians explained and experienced the city of Brasilia in gendered terms. The city was either pictured as a soft and sophisticated woman, or portrayed through images and sensations relating to a masculine reference of the wild, frontier space. Such gender analysis expands the conceptual boundaries of Fraser's interpretations, but her examination remains superficial, and further exploration of Brasilia as a gendered space is warranted.

---

<sup>27</sup> Fraser, Valerie. *Building the New World: Modern Architecture in Latin America*. Verso, 2001.

In the academic *milieu*, other works also mention Brasilia as a modern creation, and examine how the construction of the new capital falls within the broader scope of urban or architectural history. Setha Low's 1996 article, *The Anthropology of Cities*, calls for a reexamination of urban history within the broader framework of interdisciplinary studies.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, she pointed to an evident need for a stronger anthropological approach to the study of cities, and for a greater interaction between the fields of history, architecture, anthropology, sociology, among others. Within those fields researchers can classify cities relating to their functions and history, such as the Gendered City (where spaces are negotiated and contested according to specific gender roles), the Global City (greatly integrated with the global economy), and even the Modernist City. Low concluded by noting that the anthropological literature on urban arrangements uses a variety of models and paradigms from other disciplines, supporting a trend of evaluating the city through post-structural studies of gender (race, and class included). By combining such studies of the urban setting with considerations of political and economic studies of transnational culture, scholars can follow issues such as migration and identity formation. The resulting transformation of cultural environments yields a setting that creates new meaning and identity within the cityscape.

Also discussing Brasilia in the context of urban history, James Scott's 1999 book *Seeing Like a State*<sup>29</sup> offered an influential view that questioned the governmental role in creating, and maintaining, urban space. In his view, society ultimately attempts to

---

<sup>28</sup> Low, Setha M. "The Anthropology of Cities: Imagining and Theorizing the City." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 25 (January 1, 1996): 383-409.

<sup>29</sup> Scott, James C. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. Yale University Press, 1999.

understand inhabited space while the State attempts to create further social legibility. Thus, throughout history, governments have implemented architectural restructuring as a part of administrative reforms aimed at generating greater population control. This has often resulted in conflicts between state officials and the masses, often resistant to change. Many of the urban reforms executed in main urban centers, such as Haussmann's 1800s renovation of Paris, represented a quest for greater state centralization and public control. On the other side of this unequal relationship stood the general population, fearful of relinquishing local knowledge and control of the urban space that they already knew and dominated.

Scott discusses the evolution of state interference in urban settings throughout history, including what he considers the "great utopian social engineering schemes" of the twentieth century. He concludes that while states attempt to create more functional societies through greater centralization and urban planning, they ultimately fail in achieving this goal, due to the interaction of four main elements: stronger administrative ordering of nature and society, High-Modernist ideology, the presence of an authoritarian state, and finally, the existence of a prostrate civil society. In the author's words, "legibility of a society provides the capacity for large-scale social engineering, high modernist ideology provides the desire, authoritarian state provides the determination to act on that desire, and an incapacitated civil society provides the leveled social terrain on which to build."<sup>30</sup>

Scott's book condemns what he considers the "imperialism of high-modernist social order."<sup>31</sup> In order to accomplish greater social legibility, states eliminate local monopoly

---

<sup>30</sup>Scott, James C. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. Yale University Press, 1999, p. 5.

<sup>31</sup> Scott, James C. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. Yale University Press, 1999, p.6.

over information by implementing strict urban structures and bureaucracies, thus attempting to further homogenize both population and landscape, and reach greater uniformity. Scott complains that such systems ignore natural tendencies, needs, and propensities, while privileging artificially constructed urban and social structures. He writes, “many state activities aim at transforming the population, space, and nature under their jurisdiction into the closed systems that offer no surprises and that can best be observed and controlled.”<sup>32</sup> By contrast, Scott values the resilience of local knowledge and natural social diversity.

Within this critical analysis of state participation and involvement in social and urban structure, Scott ranks Brasilia as possibly the greatest example of what he calls a High Modernist City. As such, the city was a product of authoritarian High Modernism and reflected the desire to engineer every aspect of national, urban, and social structures, a tendency that further led to what he considers the “great state-sponsored calamities,” the most notorious, as mentioned by the author, being Hitler’s Final Solution. In reference to the construction of Brasilia, he concludes that the new capital represents the closest example of a High-Modernist City, one that reflected both governmental planning and control, in a context of literally building on a site where nothing was built before. The many challenges of actually executing such an ambitious project led to the problem of solving the many social issues that, according to Scott, inevitably stem from such a strictly planned scenario.

Another work that deals with the complex development of urban spaces, and with the delicate structure of social interaction within such settings, is Joseph Rykwert’s *The Seduction of Place*, from 2002.<sup>33</sup> In discussing the evolution of modernist architecture and

---

<sup>32</sup>Ibid p. 82.

<sup>33</sup> Rykwert, Joseph. *The Seduction of Place: The History and Future of Cities*. Vintage, 2002.

suggesting that inhabitants of a specific urban setting retain more agency than previously believed, Rykwert expands on Scott's considerations of state intervention by making room for greater popular resistance, either direct or subconsciously expressed in consumerist choices. Rykwert disagrees with Scott's vision of a negative, and imposed, order from above, arguing instead that there is a balance between structure and popular navigation of urban spaces. He also argues for the importance of "reading" the city, and the interaction between society and space, in which one cannot change without changing the other. Furthermore, Rykwert rejects the fixed notion that the city is a source of social inequality. From his perspective, urban growth and organization is not neither organic, nor artificial; instead it is a consequence of the ebb and flow of the interaction of many different social, cultural, economic, and political elements. On Brasilia, Rykwert reiterates the conclusion of many previous authors, that the original plans failed to consider how social relations would be influenced by urban organization, and that the lack of structured living arrangements for the *candangos* represented a significant flaw in both the architectural planning and in the social ideology that the planners supposedly defended.

In 2002, architectural and urban design historian Eric Mumford published *The CIAM*<sup>34</sup> *Discourse on Urbanism*, a work centered on the history and significance of the movement to the development of modern architecture.<sup>35</sup> Founded in Switzerland in 1928, CIAM is often seen as a unified effort or representation of modern architecture. However, Mumford argues that it was less homogeneous than initially believed, and that the many diverging intellectual, and technical, considerations among its members originated from

---

<sup>34</sup> *Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne*, or International Congresses of Modern Architecture.

<sup>35</sup> Mumford, Eric. *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928-1960*. The MIT Press, 2002.



internal and external political, and ideological, pressures. The organization was also originally intended as a propaganda tool for furthering the development of modern architecture, as a logical antithesis to traditionalist architectural style. CIAM was clearly a product of the new technology-driven age, and also became an instrument for those advocating efficiency and social transformation through architectural planning.

Amidst numerous academic works on modern architecture, on Le Corbusier, and on CIAM, Mumford's publication stands out as a thorough revision of the movement's history. In reference to the new capital of Brazil as a by-product of CIAM, Mumford notes that even some members of the movement questioned the city's success as an urban and modern functional projection. They worried that Costa's design might lead to a "cold" city, and to further social problems. Mumford concludes that although authors such as Jane Jacobs have strongly criticized the functionalism of CIAM, the group's legacy persists. Thus, the "linking of architectural form with positive urban social change intentionally or unintentionally retains some aspects of the CIAM synthesis of architecture, urbanism, and social transformation even on the part of those who most vehemently claim to reject it<sup>36</sup>."

In his 2008 book *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*, Lawrence Vale also discusses the power and role of modernist architecture in shaping society. Vale writes that "the manipulation of civic space tends to sanction the leadership's exercise of power and to promote the continued quiescence of those who are excluded."<sup>37</sup> This is a system that involves both alienation and empowerment, and attempts to represent, or construct, new national identities. Within this framework, the active role of architecture and urban design

---

<sup>36</sup>Ibid, p.7.

<sup>37</sup>Vale, Lawrence. *Architecture, Power and National Identity*. 2nd ed. Routledge, 2008, p.8.

in the construction of social roles and relationships becomes evident. The interaction between urbanism, planning, and social structure may lead to positive outcomes, as CIAM's proponents originally hoped, but may also lead to negative circumstances, such as those feared by James Scott. Either way, the use of architecture as an instrument of social control and of legitimization of specific political discourses is undeniable. Vale portrays Brasilia as a case study in which governmental interests clearly used the new capital as a symbol of national growth, as well as a means to create a new national identity. For those builders, the city represented the realization of an old postcolonial dream, reinforced by newer geopolitical interest in greater territorial and national integration.

Moving beyond pure architectural history, Elizabeth Wilson's 1992 monograph *The Sphinx in the City* examines cities as sites of gendered relations, and discusses how women usually negotiate and navigate urban spaces.<sup>38</sup> Although Wilson does not focus specifically on Latin American cities or architecture, her analysis of gender roles in European cities can offer valuable parallels with the Latin American experience. Wilson describes how authorities sought to regulate the interaction of women with, and within, the city, and how women's increasing presence also shaped urban planning and design, generating the need for a more policed city. She also analyzes how different urban centers carry specific gender identities, such as Paris, normally portrayed in a more feminine light and with contradicting images of beauty, honor, and prostitution. Commenting on modernism, Wilson noted that while CIAM's International Style professed social change, its male-oriented and male-dominated nature often undervalued the importance of further including women within the

---

<sup>38</sup> Wilson, Elizabeth. *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder, and Women*. University of California Press, 1992.

context of a new, and manipulated, society. Le Corbusier believed that modern life inflicted stress on women through grueling work hours, and he concluded that women should ideally return to the domestic sphere, a pattern that would, in turn, reduce industrial unemployment. Wilson emphasizes the elitism and sexism behind such ideas of an allegedly futuristic visionary. Countering critics of urban life, Wilson argues that the cityscape represents liberation and freedom for women, within the dual context of male-female dichotomy that still permeates society.

Other works in the field of gender studies, such as June Hahner's *Emancipating the Female Sex*,<sup>39</sup> and Susan Besse's *Restructuring Patriarchy*,<sup>40</sup> have also discussed the struggle for female emancipation, and for an equal and satisfactory redefinition of gender roles in Brazilian society. In analyzing the history of feminine politicization and suffrage in Brazil, Hahner concludes that the fight for equality was gender oriented, but class dominated. She points out that in urban centers, mainly São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, the lower strata of society constituted of female, black, urban workers who had greater access to the streets but simultaneously had to navigate public spaces under the burden of a gendered double standard.<sup>41</sup>

Besse's work, while also mentioning the history of the Brazilian feminist movement, focuses on the governmental tendencies of rebuilding national identity while simultaneously reshaping traditional gender roles. Thus, she notes that Vargas and his group of technocrats

---

<sup>39</sup> Hahner, June E. *Emancipating the Female Sex: The Struggle for Women's Rights in Brazil, 1850–1940*. Duke University Press Books, 1993.

<sup>40</sup> Besse, Susan K. *Restructuring Patriarchy: The Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil, 1914–1940*. The University of North Carolina Press, 1996.

<sup>41</sup>This reality is also identified in the memories of the female “pioneers” of Brasilia’s early construction period, and will be further discussed.

benefitted from their public image of modernizers and transformers of the traditional oligarchic system. Under that banner, they justified and implemented an institutionalized modern gender system of male domination, hence “restructuring” patriarchy. Besse’s analysis is crucial to a better understanding of gender roles in Brasilia, since even though the political administration changed, social organization and relations remained the same. In this sense, the pioneering men and women who moved to Brasilia to participate in the city’s construction carried with them different notions of gender roles, most of which had been shaped during the Vargas years.

Of course, Brazilian academics have also made important contributions to the field of gender studies in Brazilian history. In 2003’s *Uma História do Feminismo no Brasil*,<sup>42</sup> Celi Regina Pinto describes the evolution of feminism within the country’s particular setting of political, cultural, and social transformation since the early twentieth century.<sup>43</sup> Pinto’s work offers crucial insight to the background of the Brazilian feminist movement, which aids with the interpretation of expected, and accepted, gender roles in *Brasiliense* society at the time of construction. Similarly, the edited volume *História das Mulheres no Brasil*,<sup>44</sup> discusses women’s social roles, stretching from pre-contact civilizations up to the diverse, and complex, relationship between women, men, power, and the classes in modern Brazil. Although the book does not examine Brasilia specifically, the observations of how gender roles in different regions have varied throughout the country can shed light on the story of how women from diverse regional backgrounds and cultures interacted in the constructed

---

<sup>42</sup>Roughly translated to *A History of Feminism in Brazil*.

<sup>43</sup> Pinto, Céli Regina Jardim. *Uma Historia Do Feminismo No Brasil*. Not Avail, 2003.

<sup>44</sup>Del Priore, Mary. *História das mulheres no Brasil*. 7th ed. [São Paulo Brazil]: Editora Contexto ;Editora Unesp Fundação, 2004.

space of the nation's new capital. Finally, in 2005, Brazilian sociologists Clara Araújo and Celi Scalón published a compendium of essays on gender studies and gender relations within the domestic and public spheres of Brazilian society.<sup>45</sup> Concentrating on the traditional division of labor and on how men and women perceive their roles within this established system this work offers perspectives that are also useful for a deeper interpretation of how women navigated private spaces and the work environment in Brasília.

Focusing specifically on Brasília, Ivany Câmara Neiva's PhD dissertation explores how the city was comprehended and envisioned by those involved in its construction, and by those who later moved to the new capital. Neiva carefully analyzes how the city was perceived and described in the many letters sent by politicians, artists, or the public in general, to President Juscelino Kubitschek. Although Neiva did not concentrate on gender and its implications in the urban imaginary, her work represents a noteworthy examination of how imagery, symbolism, and national discourse interacted to form the ultimate experience of living in Brasília. She concludes that the history of the capital's construction is best understood through the lens of how the lower classes were searching for better living, and working, conditions. Thus, promoters portrayed Brasília not only as the future capital of a modern Brazil, but also as a promise of greater dignity for those men and women struggling for survival at the lower end of the social ladder. This analysis suggests powerful racial and social implications, within the broader topic of gendered relations.

Non-academic books published in recent decades on the subject of women and Brasília tended to be mere descriptions of the routine of the female pioneers, lacking any

---

<sup>45</sup> Araújo, Clara; Scalón, Celi. *Genero, Família e Trabalho no Brasil*. FGV, FAPERJ, 2005.

greater in-depth discussion of the complexities of social, political, cultural, and economic elements on gendered relations. In 2001, Elvira Barney published *Mulheres Pioneiras de Brasília*,<sup>46</sup> an expression of personal initiative to maintain the memories of those pioneering women. While the work carries strong classist undertones and hardly mentions social and racial conflicts, it is an interesting narrative of how certain women arrived in Brasília in the early construction years, and of how they remember their roles in the complex process of shaping a new national identity while building, directly or indirectly, the nation's capital. A similar book, *Poeira e Batom*,<sup>47</sup> by Tânia Fontenele Mourao and Mônica Gaspar, represents an emotional expression motivated by the authors' strong feeling of belonging to a class of national heroes, the *candangos*.<sup>48</sup> Describing the daily lives of fifty women who arrived in Brasília between 1956 and 1960, the book includes anecdotes told by the pioneering women themselves. In paying homage to a part of the working class population normally forgotten: wives, mothers, and even single, hard working women, the book illustrates female reality in the frontier-space of the new capital.

While the vast historiography of Brasília makes it impossible to review all academic works on the topic, the overall analytical perspective has shifted over the last fifty years. The most recent trend among scholars has been to focus on sociocultural history of the new capital, and on the interaction between the physicality of the city, and the routine dynamics of those inhabiting it. This observation calls for a closer look at urban studies and

---

<sup>46</sup>Barney, Elvira. *Mulheres pioneiras de Brasília*. Thesaurus Editora, 2001. Translating to "Pioneer Women of Brasília."

<sup>47</sup>Mourao, Tania Fontenele; Oliveira, Monica Ferreira Gaspar. *Poeira e Batom no Planalto Central: 50 Mulheres na Construcao de Brasília*. Petrobras, 2010. Translates to *Dust and Lipstick*.

<sup>48</sup>At an encounter with Tânia Fontenelle she explained how proud she was of being "second generation" *candango*. This feeling, in itself, is an interesting topic for further research into how current inhabitants of Brasília perceive their identities in light of their *candango* ancestry. However, the topic goes beyond the scope of this project, but remains a possibility for the future.

methodologies, which suggest a base for further research on Brasilia and its many gendered relations.

### **Brasilia and Urban History**

Writing in the 1960s Lewis Mumford one of the greatest American urban theorists, viewed the city as an organism with a certain level of integrity, and limited by spatial boundaries.<sup>49</sup> Within those boundaries, complex relations unfolded, revealing the intricacies of sociopolitical, economical, and even environmental exchanges. This view, a product of a specific historical context, does not suffice as an adequate method of understanding urban centers today. Contemporary cities are certainly not bound by strict geographical or even geosocial, limitations. Frontier spaces are more permeable and flexible than they were before. Likewise, classist structures also reflect the greater mobility that society currently enjoys, even with its persisting challenges and obstacles. Therefore, contemporary urban research has been developing new approaches to comprehending urbanscape. Instead of focusing on bounded space, current theorists consider vast urban systems that transcend physical and functional restraints, such as shopping malls. Other observers, more concerned with the greater connection between city and country, shift their attention to issues of sustainability. Ultimately, the current trend is to observe the city as a material and social space, both shaping, and being shaped by, relations of power, culture, and identity within society.<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>49</sup>Mumford, Lewis. *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects*. Mariner Books, 1968.

<sup>50</sup>Prakash, Gyan, and Kevin M. Kruse. *The Spaces of the Modern City: Imaginaries, Politics, and Everyday Life*. Princeton University Press, 2008.

Some theorists divide urban studies into certain categories of identification and understanding, mainly materiality, mobility, division, cultures, and planning.<sup>51</sup> When assessing materialities and the city as the center of material production (or when studying urban development more broadly), the researcher of urban studies inevitably has to consider two traditional schools of thought: Neoclassical and Neomarxist. In the Neoclassical perspective, markets are at the core of urban life, and in a theoretical and desirable context there would be a harmonious balance between supply, demand, and cost. Behind the use of such an economic analysis rests the central issue of supplying consumer demand with the best prices possible, while producing with the lowest cost necessary.

Markets, as the focal point of this analysis, are not limited to the exchange of commodities, but include labor and housing, both integral components of urban structures and dynamics. This includes the sale and stipulation of land values, which also has significant outcomes on social class interaction. When land and housing prices are high, cities will normally undergo a shift in growth and in geographical organization, thus producing phenomena such as suburbanization, or urban sprawl<sup>52</sup>. This process also changes the spacial administration of urban centers by pushing certain areas into greater, or lesser, commercial value. In turn, those areas will house or serve different people and social segments, depending on cost, functionality, and new role within the city's structure.

Neomarxists also deal with issues of urban materiality based on a Marxist economic and social perspective that views markets as the source of social ailments. Such observers explore elements such as competition, accumulation, and negative social outcomes

---

<sup>51</sup>Bridge, Gary, and Sophie Watson. *The Blackwell City Reader*. 2nd ed. Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

<sup>52</sup>Bridge, Gary, and Sophie Watson. *The Blackwell City Reader*. 2nd ed. Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.



(exploitation, inequality), and consider the capitalist quest for efficient production at maximum profit as one of the main culprits behind social imbalance and, consequently, responsible for the many class problems (mainly marginalization and social invisibility) that affect urban centers.<sup>53</sup>

Part of the materiality of cities, regardless of which school of thought analyzes it, is the fact that cities are material centers, made of concrete structures and networks that further shape their future development, and the evolution of how social, class, and even racial relations are negotiated. Therefore, steel, glass, and concrete, some of the physical materials from which cities are built, carry social and economic meanings. Likewise, the more abstract elements of the cityscape, meaning the interactions between inhabitants, institutions, and the physical space, are just as crucial for an adequate understanding of the city as a built, mapped, planned, and experienced environment. In this sense, examining Brasilia through the lens of its physical and human materialities allows the urban investigator to understand how stipulated norms of political, economic, and urban orders interact within the scope of social agency.

The principle of urban materiality also underlines the idea of a city as representing an economic network. Previously analyzed in light of its fixed values (presence of industries, transportation networks such as railroads, and technological clusters) the economic city also includes social capital. This labor component extends into the realms of the tertiary and service sectors, including the presence and role of non-profit organizations.<sup>54</sup>

Designers and planners of Brasilia projected it as being merely an administrative center;

---

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ash Amin, "The Economic Base of Contemporary Cities" in *The Blackwell City Reader*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Blackwell Publishing, 2010.

with time, it gained some industries, but it cannot be compared to Brazilian industrial urban poles such as São Paulo. On the other hand, Brasília's economy relies heavily on its unplanned third sector, which absorbed most of the working class in the years following the city's inauguration. In this sense, workers that remained in the city after its inauguration also looked for employment in areas such as domestic help, public vendors, car washers, drivers, gardeners and other jobs that tailored to the needs of the *carioca* population that arrived to inhabit the new city.

Current research trends in urban studies suggest a reevaluation of the concept and limitations of materiality. The new tendency is to include considerations of physicality and culture, or the so-called materiality of affect.<sup>55</sup> Within this scope, the assembly of human and non-human factors is perceived as an agent of urban change, and of new social interactions. The evolution of new networks of materiality includes economic, physical, social, and even emotional components. Thus, urban materiality is now seen not as an inert composition, but as a dynamic interplay of cause and effect produced by those diverse elements.

The second category for analysis of cities is mobility, a term implying the ebb and flow of people, products, and capital. Within this consideration, questions of globalization and the global city, immigration and in-migration, and commercial networks become integral components of the fast pace of urban landscapes. Contemporary analysis also includes the exchange of ideas and ideologies in the examination of urban mobility, especially when considering technological advances and the new information age. Cities currently present greater mobility than ever before, due not only to transportation networks, but also to

---

<sup>55</sup>Latour, Bruno. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2007.

globalization and the World Wide Web. Such new technological capacities let ideas transcend physical barriers at warp speed, which changes concepts of identity, community, and even interaction with urban materialities.

Mobility is also characterized by urban networks that connect cities and regions, and the intensification of such social and material integration further generates divisions between rich and poor people, and across regions. The increase in the pace of intellectual, physical, and human exchanges has generated the impression of cities as fast-paced centers, bombarding its inhabitants with information, visual, and auditory stimuli, and sensations. Observers such as Georg Simmel have concluded that the only way to properly deal with such a strong and emotional experience of the cityscape is to acquire a *blasé* attitude towards urban life.<sup>56</sup> In contrasting urban and rural mentalities, Simmel tends to over-romanticize the country over the city. Nevertheless, his focus on how social, cultural, technological, and economic forces transform the psychological and emotional experience of the city remains influential in urban studies.

In the case of Brasilia during construction, the defining characteristics of mobility involved regional migration to the site of the future capital, and the consequent relationships that developed within this new, diverse society. *Candangos* came from different regions of the country, carrying with them diverse cultures and beliefs, yet uniting under the banner of national construction. According to Simmel the metropolitan experience is defined as the “agglomeration of so many persons with such differentiated interests, that their relationships and activities intertwine into a many-membered organism.”<sup>57</sup> This also holds true for

---

<sup>56</sup>Georg Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life” in *The Blackwell City Reader*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Blackwell Publishing, 2010.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid, p. 105.

Brasilia, but since the city was not yet built when the first *candangos* arrived, people experienced an unusually heavy sensation of “velocity” through the overwhelming realization that the work never stopped. Thus, the city as a construction site pulsed day and night with the sounds of active men and machines, building the capital of the future.

Mobility is also experienced through physical acts of navigating the city, such as Michel de Certeau’s claims that urbanites understand the city through the act of walking.<sup>58</sup> Many later observers have criticized the Corbusian plan of architectural design for representing “death of the street,” a condition present in Brasilia’s urban design. When considering how much Lucio Costa’s and Niemeyer’s plans focused on driving, then the role of the automobile as an instrument of transportation and urban experience becomes clear in the shaping of Brasilia.<sup>59</sup>

During the capital’s early construction phase the city’s first inhabitants felt the need to comprehend the material space around them by walking through the many construction sites, and camping grounds. With precarious streets and unsettled modes of transportation, *candangos* depended heavily on foot traffic, and this interaction between people and street helped further shape social relations and consolidate community ties, especially within the many unplanned settlements that were created by the working migrants that moved to Brasilia. In other words, while construction workers settling in the makeshift camp grounds or construction barracks valued the experience of exploring the settlements on foot, or even resulted to this due to the lack of sufficient transportation for the masses, Brasilia’s planned urban grid was designed to include wide roads and highways, long distances, and no public

<sup>58</sup> Certeau, Michel de. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. 3rd ed. University of California Press, 2011.

<sup>59</sup> Wolfe, Joel. *Autos and Progress: The Brazilian Search for Modernity*. Oxford University Press, 2010.

squares that could serve as true points of popular agglomeration. Thus, after the city's inauguration when an increasing number of government bureaucrats moved from Rio de Janeiro into Brasilia's planned core, most felt an extreme sense of detachment and loneliness when navigating the cityscape due to their habitual preference for cities that valued the public square and street life as catalysts of community interaction.<sup>60</sup>

De Certeau also emphasizes the relationship between urban planners and urbanites, and how the first group depends on the second in order to legitimate their plans and urban visions. On the other hand, city dwellers need planners in order to have a modernized structure to inhabit and work. Thus, De Certeau argues that "the user of a city picks out certain fragments of the statement in order to actualize them in secret."<sup>61</sup> By doing so, the inhabitants of an urban center often recreate the city's definition and functions, even if that means distancing reality from the original architectural plan. This dual relationship was also present in Brasilia at the time of its conception and construction, and is further evidenced in the city's post-inaugural period. In this sense, the practical new capital was transformed by its inhabitants, who translated their environment into a functional reality distinct from what was originally planned at the drawing boards.

A perfect example of this was the original plan of building Brasilia's *superquadras*, or apartment blocks, as independent and self-sufficient residence zones. According to the planner's initial design, each block had areas designated for commercial activities where bakeries, banks, schools, and shops would operate. Those commercial zones were originally

---

<sup>60</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. 1st ed. University Of Chicago Press, 1989.

<sup>61</sup>Michel de Certeau. "The Practice of Everyday Life" in *The Blackwell City Reader*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Blackwell Publishing, 2010. p. 115.

placed facing the apartment blocks, with the back entrances placed towards the street. As people moved into the housing units and occupied the shops post-inauguration, they chose to place the front of their commercial establishments facing the streets instead of the apartments, and gradually what was designed as a strict urban plan was modified by city dwellers according to their interpretation of what the cityscape should look like.<sup>62</sup>

Distinction in the urbanscape is not limited to the often contradictory duality between plan and practice, but is also present in the normative descriptions of inter-social relationships. Social division and spatial segregation also define and describe the city, and within this context of separation are key categories of sexuality, public and private spheres, racial discrimination, and class distinctions. In his study of cities and communities, sociologist Robert Park observed that there are levels of interaction within society, especially when dealing with immigration.<sup>63</sup> His theory of Race Relations Cycle stipulates that after initial contact, migrant communities interact in complex manners that include competition, ultimately leading to general assimilation. In Brasilia during the construction era, the population's original regional and racial diversity culminated in the molding of a seemingly homogenous identity (*candango*), behind which regional and racial differences in reality fueled greater discrimination. Politicians, social commentators, and even the population at large viewed workers from the Northeast differently from those of the more central states of Brazil, thus intensifying the process of internal social division and engendered relations in Brasilia, which will be further discussed later on.

---

<sup>62</sup> El-Dahdah, Fares. *CASE: Lucio Costa Brasilia's Superquadras*. Harvard Design School, Prestel, 2005.

<sup>63</sup> Persons, Stow. *Ethnic Studies at Chicago, 1905-45*. University of Illinois Press, 1987.

Urban division also appears in terms of gendered spaces and roles, which include the male-female dichotomies of both public and private spheres. Traditionally, central business and administrative urban zones have been associated with the male population, while suburban and private domains remain within the scope of the female sphere. Understanding gender differences is crucial for a thorough comprehension of how residents experience and portray the city, especially in terms of power relations and identities. According to Sophie Watson,<sup>64</sup> traditional urban organization relegates women to the domain of the household, placed within the broader frame of suburbia. According to traditional sexual division of labor women were relegated to the domestic sphere in a system that ensured the “mutual dependence of one sex on the other”<sup>65</sup> for the family’s survival and the household’s proper maintenance. With the rise of modernity, industrialization, and the new planned cities gender roles essentially remained the same and women were still generally considered to have little or no need to commute to the male-dominated urban business center. This perspective also holds true in the case of Brazil, a country with strong engendered traditions and social expectations regarding women’s rights and duties within the private sphere and society more broadly.<sup>66</sup>

In the specific case of gender within the cityscape of Brasilia, the city’s original design also attempted to separate the domestic scene from the capital’s functional center. In Lucio Costa’s original plans for the city’s housing section the *superquadras* were intended to be autonomous and the surrounding stores, banks, schools and childcare were meant to satisfy their inhabitants’ daily needs. While this arrangement was not openly directed at

<sup>64</sup>Sophie Watson, “City A/Genders” in *The Blackwell City Reader*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Blackwell Publishing,, 2010.

<sup>65</sup> Cowan, Ruth Schwartz. *More Work for Mother – The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave*. Basic Books, 1983, p. 29.

<sup>66</sup>Araujo, Clara; Scalón, Celi. *Genero, Familia e Trabalho no Brasil*. FGV, FAPERJ, 2005.

gender separation, it was meant to efficiently serve whoever stayed home, which in social practice meant wives. Connecting each block to the central highways were smaller roads intended to make the commute from home to work a faster and more efficient experience. While men drove to work every day, women could easily access the local facilities by foot. Lucio Costa did include childcare sites in his urban design, suggesting he expected women to also participate in the workforce but, given his Corbusian influence, the sexist relation between practice and what would be desirable in terms of gender roles becomes less farfetched.<sup>67</sup>

Feminist attention to urban studies, space, and gender roles gained momentum in the 1980s, when critics demanded a closer look at the absence of women from urban planning designs. In seeking to understand what drove women's exclusion from central urban systems, scholars initially concluded that female marginalization from power structures was due to institutional failures within social and governmental systems. Further inquiry led feminists to argue that access to public goods, such as housing, was extremely discriminatory, as exemplified by banking institutions' decisions to grant greater or lesser credit, depending on borrowers' marital status and number of dependents. This practice clearly relegated single mothers to inhabit poorer neighborhoods, which with fewer infrastructures made the commute between the private domain and the work space a true ordeal.<sup>68</sup>

Current feminist theories applied to urban studies call for reformulating new cityscapes in order to adequately meet different male and female needs that should be

---

<sup>67</sup> Fraser, Valerie. *Building the New World: Modern Architecture in Latin America*. Verso, 2001.

<sup>68</sup> Sophie Watson, "City A/Genders" in *The Blackwell City Reader*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Blackwell Publishing., 2010, p. 238.



recognized not as homogenous, but as distinct representations of disparaging demands that function according to each group's roles and expectations. This signals a new trend in feminist urban theory, according to which space is not seen as a continuum but as a locus of fragmenting, diverse power relations. Sexuality is another crucial element in the organization and understanding of spatial structure, and is influenced by gendered discourse on behavior while transforming urban space.<sup>69</sup> This consideration is highly applicable to a study of Brasilia's social development in its early years, since questions of acceptable sexual behavior and gendered assumptions determined the limits of women's professional and personal interaction in the frontier society, which will be discussed further on.

### **Gender Studies as a Backdrop**

The core of this research centers around the concept of gendered relations, which are defined by Joan Wallach Scott as relationships of power, normally stemming from a binary position, that are not limited to the differences between the sexes, but that include racial and classist prejudice. Such a perspective transports issues of inequality from the sphere of male/female dichotomy into a broader consideration of social relationships. This is evident in Scott's assertion that "an interest in class, race, and gender signaled first, a scholar's commitment to a history that included stories of the oppressed and an analysis of the meaning and nature of their oppression and, second, scholarly understanding that inequalities of power are organized along at least three axes."<sup>70</sup> In this perspective, the study of women's history is not confined to the examination of the female role and identity as the outcome of merely sexist classifications. Rather, women's history is also inserted into the

<sup>69</sup>Watson, Sophie; Gibson, Katherine. *Postmodern Cities and Spaces*. Wiley-Blackwell, 1995.

<sup>70</sup>Scott, Joan W. "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis." *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (December 1, 1986): p. 1054.

broader context of how factors such as social hierarchy, class, and racial categories, exert external influences on gender as another form of oppression.

In historical analysis, “gender” is often used to replace the term “women.” However, its use as a category of historical examination includes the study of men, and brings both the female and male spheres closer together through the recognition that one cannot exist and develop without the other. It also shifts theoretical thought away from the simplistic argument that female subjugation is a product of natural differences and of the ability to give birth. Instead, it asserts that the relationship between the sexes is also part of a cultural construction. Thus gender becomes, by definition, “a social category imposed on a sexed body,” as Scott wrote in 1986.<sup>71</sup>

Some feminist historians gravitate towards one main topic of discussion: the understanding of patriarchy and its impact on social and cultural settings. In this sense, patriarchy is explained as the natural male tendency towards domination which is seen, by some, as the means to counterbalance man's passive role in reproduction. Domination could be achieved by fixed social and political structures, including the sexual objectification of women, and the establishment of set moral standards that maintain female subjugation. However, this approach lends too much credit to the biological discussion of the differences between the sexes, and somewhat undermines the external cultural tendencies that also shape gender issues. Another approach grows out of Marxist Feminism, which focuses on sexuality and familial relationships as products of a material world (modes of production). One argument stemming from this perspective is that the eradication of the sexual division

---

<sup>71</sup> Scott, Joan W. “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis.” *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (December 1, 1986): p. 1056.

of labor would lead to the demise of male domination. Critics of the Marxist view argue that female subjugation existed even before the institution of capitalism, and that it prevailed even in Socialist societies.<sup>72</sup>

Finally, a third approach focuses on Freudian interpretation of childhood gender construction. This approach resonates well with many historians interested in “women's culture,” but Scott refutes it as an incomplete tool of analysis. In her opinion, this perspective limits gender issues and formation to the private sphere of the household, thus reducing the impact and importance of social, economic, and even political factors. Instead, her proposals focus on changing the historical approach to questions concerning issues that deal with the individual subject, its place within social organization, and what constitutes the essence of different interrelationships. Furthermore, she argues for the acknowledgment that power is not a central, homogeneous force, but rather a “constellation of unequal relationships”<sup>73</sup> which is also evident in Brasilia’s early social formation.

Masculinity is also another element in understanding gender relations. In 1985, Australian sociologist R.W. Connell published an article on the different expressions and powers of masculinity. The article, “Towards a New Sociology of Masculinity,”<sup>74</sup> criticized traditional and generalized male sex roles and, instead, suggested that multiple masculinities defined gender roles. In this sense, Connell’s work was an extension of previous studies completed in the 1970s, on the social power of men in transforming femininity.<sup>75</sup> As holders

---

<sup>72</sup> Butler, Judith; Scott, Joan W. *Feminists Theorize the Political*. Routledge, 1992.

<sup>73</sup> Scott, Joan W. “Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis.” *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (December 1, 1986): p. 1067.

<sup>74</sup> Carrigan, Tim; Connell, Bob; Lee, John. “Towards a New Sociology of Masculinity” In *Theory and Society*, Vol. 14, No. 5 (Sept. 1985), pp. 551-604.

<sup>75</sup> “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept.” In *Gender and Society*, Vol. 19, No. 6 (Dec. 2005), pp. 829-859.

of power, authority, and as main determinants of moral standards, changing male perceptions of gender and femininity could advance the feminist cause. However, other elements soon came into play, mostly introduced by Connell's new analysis. These included the new definitions of masculinity and how diverging forms of male identity existed, ranging from productive material providers to participating fathers, and even transsexual males.

From this new conceptualization of masculinity and femininity, Connell advanced the notion of hegemonic masculinity, understood as a "pattern of practice that allowed men's dominance over women to continue."<sup>76</sup> It was considered normative, yet not directly nor openly practiced by the male majority, even if men attempted to reinforce its theoretical premise indirectly. It also did not, at least not in Connell's main focus, signify violence. Instead, it represented "ascendancy achieved through culture, institutions, and persuasion."<sup>77</sup> In other words, men and women were raised and educated to perceived masculinity and femininity in established ways.

Another important and novel work is Mimi Schippers' article on discovering hegemonic femininity, "Recovering the Feminine Other: Masculinity, Femininity, and Gender Hegemony."<sup>78</sup> In this piece, Schippers addressed the intersection of hegemonic masculinity and femininity with other systems of inequality such as class, race, and ethnicity. Ultimately, the author attempted to shed new light on how gender expectations and identities fluctuate within different frameworks of class, race, and even national elements to either confirm or challenge traditional, or hegemonic, femininity and

---

<sup>76</sup> "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept." In *Gender and Society*, Vol. 19, No. 6 (Dec. 2005), p. 832.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Schippers, Mimi. "Recovering the feminine other: masculinity, femininity, and gender hegemony." In *Theory and Society*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Feb. 2007), pp. 85-102.

masculinity. Both Connell's and Schippers' contributions to gender studies broadly, and to the examination of power, sexuality, and identity are important theoretical frameworks for a contemporary and accurate examination of gender relations in Latin America.

Other works by Latin American historians addressing gender roles, patriarchy, sexuality, and power are also important bibliographical references for an understanding of how Brasilia's early population interpreted and further developed gender relations. In 1993, historian Joel Wolfe published his work *Working Women, Working Men*, in which he examined the different experiences of men and women working in São Paulo's industrial sector during the twentieth century.<sup>79</sup> In it, he explored how different groups exerted their political rights and negotiated new demands. While including women's experiences and challenges, Wolfe's work focused on the political implications of labor relations to the state, which is helpful when attempting to understand how gender identities and expectations are translated into the legal realm.

Another crucial work in the field of understanding gender relations in Latin America is Susan K. Besse's book *Restructuring Patriarchy*, in which she examined how the state controlled cultural, legal, and social constructions in order to recreate, and reinforce, previously established patriarchal relationships.<sup>80</sup> Her work is of primordial importance when examining how women related to the government and to the general notion of nationalism and professional aspirations. Interestingly, both Wolfe and Besse's research involve considerations of Brazilian populism, which is useful when examining the history of

---

<sup>79</sup>Wolfe, Joel. *Working Women, Working Men: Sao Paulo & the Rise of Brazil's Industrial Working Class, 1900-1955*. Duke University Press Books, 1998.

<sup>80</sup>Besse, Susan K. *Restructuring Patriarchy: The Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil, 1914-1940*. The University of North Carolina Press, 1996.

Brasília's construction since it was carried out by what historians consider a “neopopulist” president: Juscelino Kubitschek.

Finally, two books were published in Brazil by prominent national academics that address the issue of women's roles, experiences, sexuality, and rights throughout Brazilian history. The work first published in 1997, and titled *Historia das Mulheres no Brasil*,<sup>81</sup> was organized by Brazilian historian Mary Del Priore, and included several essays that covered the history of women in Brazil from the colonial to the republican periods.<sup>82</sup> The work's main contribution lies in assembling a vast collection of information that clearly illustrate the many challenges that women faced in their daily lives throughout the nation's history. However, it does not include deep analysis of gender relations, as is the trend in Brazilian research; Brazilian academic efforts separate between examinations of gender and women's history, and this volume focuses mainly on the latter.<sup>83</sup>

The second book was published in 2012, and was offered as an updated and complementary version to Mary Del Priore's 1997 work. Titled *Nova Historia das Mulheres no Brasil*, or “New History of Women in Brazil,” and edited by Carla Bassanezi Pinsky, its main focus remains on women's history, but in several essays it is possible to find deeper examinations of gender relations.<sup>84</sup> However, especially when compared to North American and European research, it is still far from a truly gender-oriented study of the intricate

---

<sup>81</sup>Translates to “History of Women in Brazil.”

<sup>82</sup>Priore, Mary Del. *História das mulheres no Brasil*. 7th ed. [São Paulo Brazil]: Editora Contexto ;Editora Unesp Fundação, 2009.

<sup>83</sup>Caldwell, Kia Lilly. “Racialized Boundaries: Women's Studies and the Question of Difference in Brazil” *The Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 70, No. 3, Black Women in the Academy: Challenges and Opportunities (Summer, 2001), pp. 219-230.

<sup>84</sup>Pinsky, Carla Bessanezi; Pedro, Joana Maria. *Nova Historia das Mulheres*. Editora Contexto, 2012.

relationships between women, men, the state, and the many diverging and even contradictory relationships between these actors. In spite of its shortcomings, Pinsky's effort in organizing a new volume is still valuable to the historical investigation of women's rights, empowerment, emancipation, and even social and cultural expectations.

There are many other theoretical works relating to urban studies, urban sociology, architectural planning, gender studies, social organization, and political control of town centers that can complement an examination of Brasilia as a Modernist, and planned, city. The ultimate goal here, however, is to seek a more practical approach to understanding the gendered effects of state architectural projection over a new urban, and social, construct. The next step is to explore the historical background of politics, economics, and social structure in Brazil, prior to the construction of its new capital. That analysis will build up the picture of Brasilia as a space of both artificial, and spontaneous, creation of identities, meanings, and power relations.

### CHAPTER 3. CONTEXTUALIZING BRASILIA

Brasilia stands as a national symbol of architectural modernism, nationalist discourse, and urban planning. In order to analyze the full dimensions of its social significance, historical meaning, and the complex relationships forged within the scope of its construction years, it is essential first to assess Brasilia's geographic, political, and social setting within the broader contextualization of Brazilian history. Likewise, to fully comprehend the effects of the new capital's construction on the national imaginary, an overview of Brasilia's foundation myth is necessary. Ultimately, it is only through such contextualization that historians can lay out exactly what proved so exciting, controversial, and revolutionary about the long process of deciding to build a new national capital city.

#### **Bosco: Foundation Myth**

Brasilia was not built only on ambitious architectural designs, but also on imperial concerns about foreign invasions, and even mysticism and prophetic visions. Like many major capitals, such as Rome, it was built on a foundation myth that incorporated divine intervention with civilizing ideology. While the Italian capital had its story about twin brothers and the she-wolf,<sup>85</sup> Brasilia had the Italian priest and educator, Giovanni Bosco.

Giovanni Melchiorre Bosco was a 19<sup>th</sup> century Roman Catholic priest known for his divine inspiration and prophecies. As an educator working with orphans in a rural Italian setting, he believed that love, instead of punishment, should be the primary tool in a child's

---

<sup>85</sup>Grandazzi, Alexandre. *The foundation of Rome: myth and history*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997.



successful religious education and upbringing. This educational approach, later defined as the Salesian Preventive System, argued that a loving environment could morally restrain a child from committing crimes, and prevent the further aggravation of man's sinful nature. During Bosco's career with the Catholic Church he went on to found the order of the Salesians of Don Bosco and, motivated by several prophetic dreams, launched a missionary campaign that spread the Order to several countries, including Brazil. Bosco was constantly dreaming of how to expand his mission and, in 1883, had a divine vision that later became Brasilia's foundation myth.<sup>86</sup>

According to the legend popularized in Brazil, on August 30<sup>th</sup>, 1883, Bosco dreamed that he was travelling through Latin America guided by an angel. Together they flew over tropical forests and swamps, rivers and plateaus.<sup>87</sup> His guide offered him the power of looking through rocks and mountains and seeing the depths of the earths. With this he was able to see rich gold mines, geological deposits of coal and iron, and layers upon layers of petroleum deposits. Recording his dream in his diaries, Bosco wrote:

I saw numerous mines of precious metals and fossil coals, and deposits of oil of such abundance as had never before been seen in other places. But that was not all. Between the fifteenth and the twentieth degrees of latitude, there was a long and wide stretch of land which arose at a point where a lake was forming. Then a voice said repeatedly: when people come to excavate the mines hidden in the middle of these mountains, there will

---

<sup>86</sup>For more on John Bosco and his dreams see: Bosco, Giovanni. *Memoirs of the Oratory*. New Rochelle: Don Bosco Publications, 1989. Desramaut, Francois. *Don Bosco et son temps*. Societa Editrice Internazionale, 1996. Stella, Pietro; Drury, John. *Don Bosco: religious outlook and spirituality*. Salesiana Publishers, 1996. Bosco, St. John. *Forty dreams of St. John Bosco: the apostle of youth*. TAN Books and Publishers, 2009.

<sup>87</sup>Silva, Ernesto. *Historia de Brasilia: um sonho, uma esperanca, uma realidade*. Coordenada-Editora de Brasilia, 1971.

appear in this place the Promised Land, flowing with milk and honey. It will be of inconceivable richness.<sup>88</sup>

In 1935, Brazilian writer Monteiro Lobato included this account of Bosco's dream in a newspaper article titled "Even the Saints confirm that there is petroleum in Brazil."<sup>89</sup> At the time, Lobato was active in a national campaign to promote federal investment in the oil industry. He believed that the creation of Brazilian oil companies would play a crucial role in advancing the country's development, and that there was enough petroleum in the central states to warrant federal intervention. Since the Salesian order had been a strong political and religious presence in Brazil since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Lobato deemed the use of Bosco's prophecy as a propaganda tool both appropriate and effective. In fact, while it did not accelerate the acceptance of his proposals by Brazilian political elite, the prophecy gained wider recognition that led to its use in yet another political campaign: the transfer of the capital from the coastal region to the country's interior.

A Brazilian politician later used the same vision, but for a different cause. Segismundo Mello, in 1956, in the midst of the campaign for consolidating the transfer of the capital from Rio de Janeiro to the state of Goiás, approached priest Cleto Caliman who showed him the Portuguese translation of Bosco's dream. After reading it, Mello asked the priest if he could add something to the translation in order to include a greater sense of settlement as developing civilization, rather than just chasing the lure of economic gain. Following this discussion, later versions of the translation came to include a subtitle that read: "Saint John Bosco, who prophesized a great civilization in the interior of Brazil, which would impress

---

<sup>88</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. 1st ed. University Of Chicago Press, 1989. P.16

<sup>89</sup>Tamanini, L. *Brasília : memória da construção*. 2nd ed. Brasília DF: Projecto Editorial, 2003. Pp. 113-115.

the world...in the capital's new location."<sup>90</sup> With this, Brazilian imagery consolidated the legend of Bosco, and the foundation myth was born.

According to author James Holston,<sup>91</sup> Brasilia's foundation myth resembles a New World mythology, reflecting the notion that by building the capital in the country's interior, Brazil would develop a new civilization in a land of plenty. This imagery refers to the Biblical story of the Promised Land, and represents the attempt to justify construction of an ambitious new city through the use of both practical and ideological arguments. In other words, if the project was divinely inspired, it could not go wrong despite its massive scale. However, prior to the consolidation of Bosco's dream as the ultimate argument for the capital's relocation, advocates had already cited more pragmatic reasons such as national sovereignty and commercial development.<sup>92</sup> Thus, justification for the construction of a new capital was based on the tripod of civilizing mission, geopolitical interests, and economic ambitions.<sup>93</sup> Ultimately, Brasilia's foundation myth relies on the central theme of the city as the civilizing agent of the country's Central Plateau. The idea of relocating the capital actually originated back during Brazil's colonial period, a long history that warrants a closer look.

### **Brazil: from Colony to Empire**

---

<sup>90</sup>Tamanini, L. *Brasília : memória da construção*. 2nd ed. Brasília DF: Projecto Editorial, 2003, p. 115.

<sup>91</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. 1st ed. University Of Chicago Press, 1989.

<sup>92</sup>Tamanini, L. *Brasília : memória da construção*. 2nd ed. Brasília DF: Projecto Editorial, 2003. Silva, Ernesto. *Historia de Brasilia: um sonho, uma esperança, uma realidade*. Coordenada-Editora de Brasilia, 1971.

<sup>93</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. 1st ed. University Of Chicago Press, 1989



**Figure 1.** Current map of Brazil, by author.

In 1549, the Portuguese colonial government established the area's capital in Salvador, a city located right on the Atlantic Ocean.<sup>94</sup> But since the 17<sup>th</sup> century, some reformers, revolutionaries, intellectuals, and politicians had also begun promoting the idea of transferring the nation's capital further inland, often for reasons of security and stability spurred, for instance, by Dutch invasion of the Brazilian Northeast.<sup>95</sup> In 1627, the Dutch military attacked Salvador,<sup>96</sup> temporarily gaining strategic advantage over the territory, which led to the spread of Dutch colonization in the nearby state of Pernambuco. The Portuguese expelled the foreign forces in 1644, but the occupation left a heritage of both

<sup>94</sup>Fausto, Boris. *Historia do Brasil*. Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 1994.

<sup>95</sup>Batista, Geraldo Nogueira; Ficher, Sylvia; Leitao, Francisco; Franca, Dionisio Alves. "Brasília: a capital in the hinterland." *Planning Twentieth Century Capital Cities*, edited by David L. Gordon, 164-181. New York: Routledge, 2006.

<sup>96</sup> Located in the state of Bahia.

cultural development (a product of Dutch painting and city organization that transformed 17<sup>th</sup> century Recife), and financial instability caused by wars and by the rupture in agricultural production.<sup>97</sup> Furthermore, competition from sugar produced in the Antilles resulted in a significant decline in the price of the Brazilian commodity, aggravating the region's financial and political crisis.<sup>98</sup> A solution to the colony's ailments came in the early 1690s, with the discovery of gold in the area of the current state of Minas Gerais.<sup>99</sup> Subsequent years brought new discoveries of gold and diamond-rich mines in that interior region, and generated the development of a rich culture in south-central Brazil, which also benefitted the coastal region of Rio de Janeiro.<sup>100</sup>

Following the discovery of precious metals in Brazil, Portugal was hit by three major occurrences that transformed the country's economic and colonial politics. The first event was the 1755 earthquake, which destroyed the city of Lisbon and most of Brazil's recent agricultural and metal production, mostly stored in the city's warehouses.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, military expenditure incurred in wars with Spain also affected Portugal's finances and, finally, towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the colony noticed a significant decline in Brazil's gold production. Together, these factors placed a significant strain on the Portuguese

---

<sup>97</sup>Currently Recife is the capital of the state of Pernambuco, and was an important cultural, political, and agricultural center during Brazil's colonial period. For more on the Dutch influence in Brazil see: Baerle, Caspar van. *The history of Brazil under the governorship of Count Johan Maurits of Nassau, 1636-1644*. University Press of Florida, 2011. Israel, Jonathan; Schwartz, Stuart. *The expansion of tolerance: religion in Dutch Brazil 1624-1654*. Amsterdam University Press, 2007. Brien, Rebecca Parker. *Visions of savage paradises: Albert Eckhout, Court Painter in Colonial Dutch Brazil 1637-1644*. Amsterdam University Press, 2007.

<sup>98</sup>Mintz, Sidney W. *Sweetness and power: the place of sugar in modern history*. Penguin Books, 1986.

<sup>99</sup>The name literally translates to "General Mines".

<sup>100</sup>Skidmore, Thomas E. *Brazil, five centuries of change*. Oxford University Press, 1999.

<sup>101</sup>Levine, Robert E. *The History of Brazil*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

economy, creating fiscal and political problems that Portuguese minister Sebastião José de Carvalho, also known as the Marquis of Pombal, addressed by passing a host of new laws.<sup>102</sup>

A product of the European Enlightenment, Pombal was an educated politician who intended to transform the traditional colonial structure that he believed had kept Portugal from efficiently reaping the full benefits of controlling a tropical colonial settlement. His efforts aimed to reorganize colonial trade, enhance cultural production, reform education for the local elite, and centralize the authority of the state by decreasing the presence of the church both in Portugal and in Brazil.<sup>103</sup> Ultimately, his reforms had positive results and sugar production recovered, which helped Portugal reduce its trade deficit, but generated a context of economic dependence of the mother country to its colony. Meanwhile, in 1763, Brazil's colonial government transferred the capital from Salvador to Rio de Janeiro, as a result of the latter's impressive urban growth, and reflecting the southern region's increasing economic and political importance.<sup>104</sup>

In the early 1800s, Portugal suffered yet another blow to its hegemony and trading system: the Continental Blockade. Napoleon Bonaparte sought to forbid the importation of British goods into continental Europe, but Portugal refrained from complying due to traditional, and long-lasting, alliances with Britain.<sup>105</sup> Napoleon, battling British forces, sent an army to invade Portugal and dethrone its monarch, which in turn led the Portuguese Court to decide to leave Lisbon and establish a new base of power in Rio de Janeiro. Thus, in 1808, the entire court, comprised of more than ten thousand courtiers, religious leaders,

<sup>102</sup> Fausto, Boris. *Historia do Brasil*. Editora da Universidade de Sao Paulo, 1994.

<sup>103</sup> Skidmore, Thomas E. *Brazil, five centuries of change*. Oxford University Press, 1999.

<sup>104</sup> Vianna, Helio. *Historia do Brasil*. Editora Melhoramentos, 1967. Lopez, Adriana; Mota, Carlos Guilherme. *Historia do Brasil, uma interpretacao*. Editora Senac Sao Paulo, 2008.

<sup>105</sup> Ellis, Geoffrey. *The Napoleonic Empire*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

and thousands of servants arrived on the shores of Brazil, aboard twenty-three vessels and thirty-one merchant ships,<sup>106</sup> all guarded by four British Royal Navy warships.<sup>107</sup>

The transfer of the Portuguese Court to Rio de Janeiro underlined that city's growing international prominence and significantly altered Brazilian colonial society. The move also suggested to the local elite (the Portuguese descendants born in Brazil) that Portugal's dependence on its colony was increasing. With the end of Napoleon's reign in 1814, the political parties that had remained in the Portuguese mainland during the French occupation demanded the court's return.<sup>108</sup> Instead of heeding their calls, the monarchy, responding to pressures from the colonial elite, elevated Brazil's status to become an official territory, part of the greater United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil, and Algarves.<sup>109</sup> But over the following years, Portugal faced internal turmoil, which led King Dom Joao VI to bring the court back from Brazil, in 1820. Although the monarch returned to his homeland, he left his son, prince Dom Pedro I, in control of the colony. The move worsened tensions between Brazil's ruling elite and Portuguese interests, who tried to impose increased taxes on the territory and revise its governing status. In 1822 Dom Pedro I finally declared independence from Portugal,<sup>110</sup> a step that marked the beginning of the historical period known as "Imperial Brazil."

---

<sup>106</sup>Skidmore, Thomas E. *Brazil, five centuries of change*. Oxford University Press, 1999. Pp. 41-42.

<sup>107</sup>For more on the transfer of the Portuguese Court to Rio de Janeiro, read: Russel-Wood, A.J.R. *The Portuguese Empire 1415-1808: a World on the Move*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998. Gomes, Laurentino. *1808: como uma rainha louca, um principe medroso e uma corte corrupta enganaram Napoleao e mudaram a historia de Portugal e do Brasil*. Editora Planeta, 2007. And Skidmore, Thomas E. *Brazil, five centuries of change*. Oxford University Press, 1999.

<sup>108</sup>Burns, E. Bradford. *A History of Brazil*. Columbia University Press, 1993.

<sup>109</sup>Skidmore, Thomas E. *Brazil, five centuries of change*. Oxford University Press, 1999.

<sup>110</sup>Vianna, Helio. *Historia do Brasil*. Editora Melhoramentos, 1967. Lopez, Adriana; Mota, Carlos Guilherme. *Historia do Brasil, uma interpretacao*. Editora Senac Sao Paulo, 2008.

Following Brazil's independence, José Bonifácio de Andrade e Silva, considered one of the country's founding fathers,<sup>111</sup> proposed the transfer of the capital from its vulnerable coastal position in Rio to a more central location. Bonifácio, an able and controversial politician and educator, argued that a new capital located in the heart of Brazil would trigger greater economic and commercial growth, foster national integration, and offer protection from the dangers of foreign intervention. Bonifácio wrote in 1824 :<sup>112</sup>

It also seems to us advantageous that we raise a central city in the interior of Brazil...in this way the Court or the seat of the Regency would be free from any external attack or surprise, and this would also attract the excess of idle population of the maritime and mercantile towns to the central provinces.<sup>113</sup>

Bonifácio's suggestion about relocating the capital of an independent Brazil to the interior attracted attention and sparked debate, but would not become official policy until after 1889, when a new Republican regime took over from Brazil's monarch, Dom Pedro II.

### **Brazilian Republicanism and Positivism**

By the 1880s, the Brazilian monarchy had alienated three central supporters: the Church, the landowning elites, and the military.<sup>114</sup> The abolition movement, which culminated in the *Lei Áurea*, or Golden Law, abolishing slavery, dissatisfied the rural elite

---

<sup>111</sup> Andrade e Silva was an active member of Brazilian political elite, chosen by prince Dom Pedro II as his royal advisor. As such, he played a pivotal role in the colony's independence by, among other things, securing international support for the separatist cause. He also displayed many of the traits that other Enlightenment politicians shared, such as a mixture of political conservatism and economic and social liberalism, the latter reflecting his concern with education and social reform.

<sup>112</sup>For more information on Andrade e Silva see: Costa, Emilia Viotti da. *The Brazilian Empire Myths and Histories*. The University of Chicago Press, 1985.

<sup>113</sup>Batista, Geraldo Nogueira; Flicher, Sylvia; Leitao, Francisco; Franca, Dionisio Alves. "Brasilia: a capital in the hinterland." *Planning Twentieth Century Capital Cities*, edited by David L. Gordon, 164-181. New York: Routledge, 2006, p.164.

<sup>114</sup> Costa, Emilia Viotti da. *The Brazilian Empire Myths and Histories*. The University of Chicago Press, 1985.



and turned it against the monarchy. Official resentment and suspicions about the strong presence of the Church led the prince's forces to arrest the bishops of the states of Para and Pernambuco.<sup>115</sup> The resulting upheaval both in the Parliament and in public opinion led many conservative politicians to question the government's role, and encouraged the Republican Party to further press for greater secularization of politics, education, and society.<sup>116</sup> Finally, the influential presence of Republican officials within the upper ranks of Brazil's military corps further bolstered separatist ideas. Complaining about low wages and government interference in military promotions, an increasing contingent of lower-ranked officers and young officials embraced Republican ideals and the associated philosophy of Positivism.<sup>117</sup>

Positivism, a theory founded by 19<sup>th</sup> century French philosopher Auguste Comte, had become an influential school of thought in Brazilian social, and political, development by the late 1800s. Created from the need to establish order and structure in French society after the Revolution, it focused on the ideal of reshaping society into a unified entity founded on applied knowledge, such as mathematics and engineering.<sup>118</sup> The goal of Positivist ideology aimed at achieving what Comte called "Universal Social Order," under which the ruling classes would embrace the Positivist philosophy, and a parallel commitment to society's general well-being.

---

<sup>115</sup>Both bishops banned Freemasons from church activities, and forbade Catholics of joining the Masonry. After Masonic protest, the State invoked the right of royal patronage and supported the Masons, leading the bishops to publicly denounce the state's authority, and the government to respond by arresting them. It is also crucial to note that both Dom Pedro I and Dom Pedro II, as well as many other members of the Brazilian government and elite, had ties with the Freemasons.

<sup>116</sup>Costa, Emilia Viotti da. *The Brazilian Empire Myths and Histories*. The University of Chicago Press, 1985.

<sup>117</sup> Fausto, Boris. *Historia do Brasil*. Editora da Universidade de Sao Paulo, 1994.

<sup>118</sup>Mill, John Stuart. *Auguste Comte and Positivism*. Cosimo Classics, 2009.

Positivist philosophy first reached Brazil through the teachings of Benjamin Constant Botelho de Magalhaes, a military engineer versed in European philosophy who served as a teacher at the Military Academy in Rio de Janeiro. In 1876, Constant founded the Positivist Society in Brazil, and through his active role in the formation of the young military corps of the Rio de Janeiro Academy, spread Positivist and Republican ideals.<sup>119</sup> His teachings proved effective, and most of the young military officers graduating from the academy in that era followed both Positivism and Republicanism.<sup>120</sup>

Brazilian positivists adopted the vision of an organized and educated moral order that would have “Love as the Principle, Order as the Base, and Progress as the End,” as it declared in the inscription over the entrance to the Positivist Church in Rio de Janeiro.<sup>121</sup> Its membership roster was composed mainly of middle class men, educated in sciences and engineering and with ties to the military. According to historian Robert Nachman,<sup>122</sup> the country's middle class felt increasingly disconnected from traditional organizations, such as the Catholic Church and the different state oligarchies. This does not mean that they denounced Catholicism, but rather that they questioned the political practices of Brazilian elites, most of whom were Catholic and participated in the system of the oligarchies. For those feeling alienated from the political and social center, Positivism represented a venue of

---

<sup>119</sup>Carvalho, Jose Murilo de. *A formacao das almas: o imagiario da Republica no Brasil*. Companhia das Letras, 1990.

<sup>120</sup>Castro, Celso. *Militares e a Republica*. Editora Zahar, 1995.

<sup>121</sup>Diacon, Todd A. *Stringing together a nation – Candido Mariano da Silva Rondon and the construction of a modern Brazil, 1906-1930*. Duke University Press, 2004. p.82.

<sup>122</sup>Nachman, Robert G. “Positivism, Modernization, and the Middle Class in Brazil” *Hispanic American Historical Review* Vol. 57, No. 1, 1977.

intellectual and moral involvement under the attractive proposition of moderate social transformation through paternalistic programs.<sup>123</sup>

Positivist followers among the military and middle class played a crucial role in the replacement of the monarchy with a Republican government, building alongside other sources of unrest, including the estrangement between the state and the Church, and the growing political dissatisfaction of Brazil's landowning elite.<sup>124</sup> Indeed, the official flag of the new Republic of Brazil, created in 1889, bore the Positivist credo, "Order and Progress."<sup>125</sup> In that year, a military Republican coup led the overthrow of prince Dom Pedro II and replaced him with a new military president, Floriano Peixoto, inaugurating Brazil's Republican era.<sup>126</sup> Motivated by the nationalistic and Positivist discourse of progress through unity, the Republican government reopened the issue of moving the capital to the country's interior. Advocates believed that the project of transferring the capital would better represent national interests, improve the nation's defense protection, and serve as a tool for national expansion.<sup>127</sup> This sentiment led to the government to include an article in the new Constitution, in 1891, that stated that an area of approximately 14,400 square kilometers in Brazil's Central Plateau should be set aside for the construction of the new capital.<sup>128</sup>

In order to fulfill that constitutional decree, Brazil's leaders realized that they needed an organized effort to select and chart the exact location of construction. Thus, in 1892, the

<sup>123</sup>Nachman, Robert G. "Positivism, Modernization, and the Middle Class in Brazil" *Hispanic American Historical Review* Vol. 57, No. 1, 1977.

<sup>124</sup>Castro, Celso. *Militares e a Republica*. Editora Zahar, 1995.

<sup>125</sup>Diacon, Todd A. *Stringing together a nation – Candido Mariano da Silva Rondon and the construction of a modern Brazil, 1906-1930*. Duke University Press, 2004. p.82.

<sup>126</sup>Bethell, Leslie. *Brazil: Empire and Republic, 1822-1930*. Cambridge University Press, 1989.

<sup>127</sup> Batista, Geraldo Nogueira; Ficher, Sylvia; Leita, Francisco; Franca, Dionisio Alves. "Brasilia: a capital in the hinterland." *Planning Twentieth Century Capital Cities*, edited by David L. Gordon, 164-181. New York: Routledge, 2006, p.164.

<sup>128</sup> Tamanini, L. *Brasília : memória da construção*. 2nd ed. Brasília DF: Projecto Editorial, 2003.

first Republican president, Floriano Peixoto, issued a decree creating Brazil's Central Plateau Exploratory Commission, which would be responsible for exploring the central region of Brazil covering the current state of Goiás.<sup>129</sup> This group, also known as the "Cruls Mission" named after engineer and expedition leader Louis Cruls, spent more than six months mapping the area's topography, and registering its flora and fauna. There they also stipulated the site for what became known as the "Cruls Rectangle," a rectangular area that would harbor the heart of the nation's future capital.<sup>130</sup>

The actual demarcation of a physical area in the heartland of Brazil served practical and symbolic purposes. With the expedition's conclusion, the project of relocating the capital to the Central Plateau gained a more concrete perspective, and stories of adventure and discoveries helped promote the importance of exploring the country's interior. In the decades that followed, several presidents attempted to implement the project, motivated mainly by the perceived need to shift Brazil's political power from the coast to the interior. Representatives of the state of Goiás had started to demand greater political influence to match their area's economic importance.<sup>131</sup> The Positivist belief in national unity continued to promote the dream of transferring the capital, as did military men's belief that they were destined to fulfill a civilizing mission, bringing enlightenment to seemingly-backward natives and inhabitants of the country's politically and logistically isolated interior. But the

---

<sup>129</sup>Batista, Geraldo Nogueira; Ficher, Sylvia; Leita, Francisco; Franca, Dionisio Alves. "Brasilia: a capital in the hinterland." *Planning Twentieth Century Capital Cities*, edited by David L. Gordon, 164-181. New York: Routledge, 2006, p.164.

<sup>130</sup>Couto, Ronaldo Costa. *Brasilia Kubitschek de Oliveira*. Editora Record, 2010.

<sup>131</sup>Tamanini, L. *Brasília : memória da construção*. 2nd ed. Brasília DF: Projecto Editorial, 2003.

goal of relocating the capital was sidetracked by other projects of national integration, especially since the political elite of Rio de Janeiro soon resisted any notion of relocation.<sup>132</sup>

While debate over moving the capital stalled, Brazil's government moved ahead with other unifying projects, such as the Strategic Telegraph Commission of Mato Grosso to Amazonas, also known as the Rondon Commission. This was an expedition led by Cândido Mariano da Silva Rondon, a Positivist engineer and army officer whose mission was to construct a telegraph line across the Amazon Basin to facilitate the region's national integration. A clear example of state interest in expanding and centralizing its authority, the Rondon Commission cut through the dense forest setting up telegraph stations, new settlements, and mapping the region's flora and fauna from 1907 to 1915. Motivated by his Positivist beliefs in progress, national unification, and a sense of civic duties, Rondon embraced the challenge of leading men through the uncertain terrain of the Amazon region with the enthusiasm of one driven by an ultimate civilizing mission.<sup>133</sup>

It was precisely the belief that his actions represented a new moment in Brazilian national construction that helped Rondon push his men through the challenges of famine, physical danger, rugged terrain, and tropical disease. Unfortunately, the new telegraph lines and roads built by the Commission did little to consolidate the region's *de facto* national integration.<sup>134</sup> However, the project achieved another aim while trying to educate the native Amazonian population in civic duties and national symbolism: it gave the region's inhabitants a sense, if only symbolic, of belonging to a greater national entity. It also

---

<sup>132</sup>Diacon, Todd A. *Stringing together a nation – Candido Mariano da Silva Rondon and the construction of a modern Brazil, 1906-1930*. Duke University Press, 2004.

<sup>133</sup> Bigio, Elias dos Santos. *Candido Rondon: a integracao nacional*. Contraponto Editora, 2000.

<sup>134</sup> Diacon, Todd A. *Stringing together a nation – Candido Mariano da Silva Rondon and the construction of a modern Brazil, 1906-1930*. Duke University Press, 2004.

reflected the country's growing interest in pushing further inland to consolidate settlement, unification, and regional development.<sup>135</sup>

Continuing the effort to generate national integration and revisiting the 1891 constitutional mandate in 1920, President Epitácio Pessoa issued a decree to initiate construction of the new capital. In 1922, supporters laid a ceremonial foundation stone within the "Cruls Rectangle." However, critics warned that trying to build a new interior capital city would take too great an economic toll on the country's finances. The construction plans also appeared politically risky, since it was unlikely that a single presidential administration would be able to complete such ambitious work. Those considerations again deterred any move to actually begin relocating the capital, and so the new foundation stone remained merely a promise for the future.<sup>136</sup>

Meanwhile, Rio de Janeiro was a growing urban center, and with its growth came social and political unrest. Gradually, the city became the center of class struggle with union strikes, military protests, and an increase in criminality.<sup>137</sup> For some political and social observers such upheavals in Rio made it paramount that national power be relocated to a new site. A growing number of Brazilians supported the idea of building a new capital, but Rio's local and regional political parties continued to resist the notion. Those forces preferred to maintain the status quo, since they clearly benefitted from having commerce and politics concentrated in Rio de Janeiro.<sup>138</sup> It took the military coup of 1930 to break this

<sup>135</sup> Bigio, Elias dos Santos. *Candido Rondon: a integracao nacional*. Contraponto Editora, 2000.

<sup>136</sup> Holston, James. *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. 1st ed. University Of Chicago Press, 1989.

<sup>137</sup> Meade, Teresa. "Living Worse and Costing More: Resistance and Riot in Rio de Janeiro, 1890-1917." *Journal of Latin American Studies*. Vol. 21, No. 2, 1989, pp. 241-266.

<sup>138</sup> For more information on Rio de Janeiro's riots and urban culture during the early 1900s see: Sisson, Rachel; Jackson, Elizabeth A. "Rio de Janeiro, 1875-1945: the shaping of a new urban order." *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, Vol. 21, Brazil Theme Issue, 1995, pp. 138-155. AND Needell, Jeffrey D.

political stalemate, and to redirect national interests towards further interiorization of the country.

### **Brazil: 1930s**

In order to function effectively, Brazil's Republican political system needed a certain level of cooperation between the main state governors, and the different political parties. As historian Thomas Skidmore clearly explains, once the parties agreed on the presidential nominees, "the state governments had the power to administer elections and did not hesitate to manipulate the returns to fit their pre-election agreements. With the support of the political leaders of enough states to insure an electoral majority, the nominee endorsed by the incumbent regime need have little fear of defeat."<sup>139</sup>

This system of political favoritism was the base of Brazil's "Republic of the Oligarchies," as the period is commonly known. As expected, in the 1930 elections, the favorite presidential candidate won. However, the opposition, united under the label of "Liberal Alliance," denounced the victory with allegations of fraud. Such electoral controversies were not uncommon in Brazilian Republican system, and had occurred several times before.<sup>140</sup> In 1930, the Liberal Alliance was particularly incensed because the newly elected president was from São Paulo, as was his predecessor, President Washington Luis. That regional dominance broke the unofficial agreement between the parties stating that winning candidates should alternate between the states of coastal São Paulo and the

---

"The Revolta Contra Vacina of 1904: the Revolt against 'Modernization' in Belle-Epoque Rio de Janeiro." *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 67, No. 2, 1987, pp. 233-269.

<sup>139</sup> Skidmore, Thomas. *Politics in Brazil 1930-1945, an Experiment in Democracy*. Oxford University Press, 2007. P. 3.

<sup>140</sup> Fausto, Boris. *A Revolução de 1930*. Companhia das Letras, 1997. And Levine, Robert. *The History of Brazil*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

interior's Minas Gerais. In this sense, since the previous President had been from São Paulo, the next successful presidential candidate should be from Minas Gerais or, in the specific case of the 1930 election, from Minas' allied state, Rio Grande do Sul.<sup>141</sup>

Political chaos ensued, especially after the assassination of the Alliance's vice-president nominee, João Pessoa, worsened existing divides in the Republican system. The murder stemmed from both political upheaval and a lover's quarrel, but rumors of a connection between the murderer, a politician from Brazil's Northeastern region, and President Washington Luis triggered an active response from Rio Grande do Sul's representatives.<sup>142</sup> The involved groups used extensive propaganda to accuse the winning party of committing the crime. Such inflammatory propaganda, along with the dissatisfaction of certain military factions and the rise of political opposition against the Oligarchic Republican system, propelled a revolutionary movement to organize. In October, 1930, military forces under rebel control occupied government buildings in several states, including Minas Gerais, São Paulo, and Rio Grande do Sul. While the central government tried to suppress the revolt, the opposing candidate and military officer from Rio Grande do Sul, Getulio Vargas, mobilized three thousand men from the state's armed forces, and travelled to Rio de Janeiro. On November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1930, Vargas took over the presidency in a rather uneventful coup, and thus marked the end of the Oligarchic regime.<sup>143</sup>

---

<sup>141</sup> For the 1930 election, Getulio Vargas, from Rio Grande do Sul, was nominated as the official candidate of the Liberal Alliance. For more information see Fausto, Boris. *Historia do Brasil*. Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 1994.

<sup>142</sup> Fausto, Boris. *A Revolução de 1930*. Companhia das Letras, 1997.

<sup>143</sup> Fausto, Boris. *A Revolução de 1930*. Companhia das Letras, 1997. And Levine, Robert M. *Father of the Poor? Vargas and His Era*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.



Vargas' presidency began with a firm principle that the country needed a centralized government to reorganize its political system. However, Brazilian society clamored first for electoral reform. A once marginalized urban middle class now sought greater political representation and participation. When Vargas hesitated in calling for new elections after a couple years, the country's established political parties grew wary of his intents. In 1932, political opposition erupted in an armed revolt in Sao Paulo. Christened the "Constitutionalist Revolution," its leaders questioned Vargas' true intentions in not holding new elections. Brazilian armed forces contained the revolt and, to demonstrate his alleged commitment to a constitutional government, Vargas summoned the National Assembly that, in 1934, established the country's new Constitution.<sup>144</sup>

The 1934 Constitution reiterated, among other things, the goal of transferring the capital from the coast to the hinterlands,<sup>145</sup> and scheduled a date for a future election. However, politics in Brazil, as in Europe, was growing increasingly radical, and the strengthening of a leftist movement in Brazil gave Vargas the ideal condition for suspending the country's constitutional plans. In 1937, government supporters allegedly discovered a plan for a Communist revolution.<sup>146</sup> In reality the document, called the "Cohen Plan," had been fabricated by Vargas' military supporters to serve as legal justification for greater centralization of power. Thus, by denouncing the dangers of the Communist movement within Brazil, Vargas executed yet another coup, suspended Congressional activities,

---

<sup>144</sup>Skidmore, Thomas. *Politics in Brazil 1930-1945, an Experiment in Democracy*. Oxford University Press, 2007. And Levine, Robert M. *The History of Brazil*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

<sup>145</sup> Tamanini, L. *Brasília : memória da construção*. 2nd ed. Brasília DF: Projecto Editorial, 2003.

<sup>146</sup> Bertolli Filho, Claudio. *Republica Velha e a Revolução de 30*. Editora Atica, 2003.

abolished all political parties, and inaugurated a regime known as the “New State”, or *Estado Novo*.<sup>147</sup>

The Vargas Era lasted until 1945, during which period his administration focused on achieving greater political centralization and national industrial development. Those immediate goals temporarily sidetracked any direct efforts in the long-standing proposal to transfer the capital away from Rio de Janeiro. However, the president’s quest for expanding Brazilian production, reforming national social and labor laws, and generating a new, stronger, and more united national identity would ultimately serve as both the philosophical and practical basis for constructing a new capital.

As president, one of Vargas’ main objectives was to transform a country that was a federation of strong regional powers, into a centralized entity united under the banner of national identity and interests. Symbolically he did this in 1937, with the ceremony of the “Burning of the (state) Flags”<sup>148</sup> in which he celebrated the end of a fragmented Brazil and the beginning of an organized union. In practical terms, his concern with uniting the country was evident in the creation of bureaucratic agencies responsible for the organization, administration and occupation of the national territory. In this sense, institutions such as the Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics (IBGE), and National Cartography Council were created, all with the mission of helping the new national state understand, recognize, and administer its vast territory.<sup>149</sup> Previously, each state had enjoyed significant autonomy in territorial control, the ability to negotiating funding directly with international agencies,

---

<sup>147</sup>Bourne, Richard. *Getulio Vargas of Brazil, 1883-1954: sphinx of the pampas*. C. Knight, 1974. And Neto, Lira. *Getulio (1882-1930) Dos anos de formação a conquista do poder*. Companhia das Letras, 2012.

<sup>148</sup>Williams, Daryle. *Culture Wars in Brazil: The First Vargas Regime, 1930–1945*. Duke University Press.

<sup>149</sup>Santos, Milton. *Brasil territorio e sociedade no inicio do seculto 21*. 13<sup>th</sup> edition, Editora Record, 2011.

and many other matters. As an example, Thomas Skidmore cites the way that the state of São Paulo obtained an international loan to build its railroad infrastructure through direct negotiation with foreign investors.<sup>150</sup> Furthermore, areas such as education, labor organization, and logistic infrastructure were relegated to state responsibility. With the New State, such functions shifted to federal competence, and the government exercised greater central authority over state activities.<sup>151</sup>

In 1937, still with the goal of greater national unity and territorial integration, Vargas announced his “March to the West,” which was a campaign to promote migration from coastal cities to the central regions of the country. His goals were to increase the settlement of Brazil’s interior, and increase agricultural production.<sup>152</sup> Vargas also hoped that a new migratory wave would help displace population from the over-crowded urban areas of Brazil’s Southeastern region, mainly Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. The discourse of internal colonization also reflected the general 20<sup>th</sup> century belief in Brazil, that centralization and unification represented the ultimate tools of national growth and modernization which warranted, among other things, the construction of an expansive network of highways and similar physical infrastructure stretching into the interior. This ideal, present in government efforts such as the Rondon Commission, led Vargas to encourage settlement in two main regions, the Center-west, meaning the states of Goiás, Mato Grosso, Mato Grosso do Sul, and Tocantins, and the North, encompassing the states of Rondonia, Roraima, and Amazonas.<sup>153</sup>

---

<sup>150</sup>Skidmore, Thomas. *Politics in Brazil 1930-1945, an Experiment in Democracy*. Oxford University Press, 2007.p. 33.

<sup>151</sup>Fausto, Boris. *Historia do Brasil*. Editora da Universidade de Sao Paulo, 1994.

<sup>152</sup>Couto, Ronaldo Costa. *Brasilia Kubitschek de Oliveira*. Eidtora Record, 2010.

<sup>153</sup>Wolfe, Joel. *Autos and Progress – The Brazilian Search for Modernity*. Oxford University Press, 2010.

Despite Vargas' support of interior colonization, he strongly opposed the creation of a new capital city in the country's hinterland during the late 1930s. His focus was the expansion of Brazilian industrial capacity and economic growth, and in order to maintain centralization and public support for his government, he reformed the country's labor relations. Through the creation of national policies that controlled labor in Brazil, such as reduced work hours, paid sick leave, and better retirement plans, he won general support and the title of a Populist leader.<sup>154</sup> Therefore, involved with other pressing national matters, including an intricate web of diplomatic relations with both the United States and the Third Reich during World War II,<sup>155</sup> his government refrained from promoting the project of the capital's transfer. However, ironically, his second government, from 1950 to 1954, ultimately laid the legal foundations for the transfer of Brazil's political center from Rio de Janeiro.<sup>156</sup>

In 1945, Vargas's "New State" government ended, in part due to Brazil's changing position within the international world order. From 1944 to 1945, Brazil sent a military contingent, called the Brazilian Expeditionary Force, to fight in support of the Allied Forces.<sup>157</sup> The country's participation in World War II represented a national commitment to democratic principles, an ideal which contradicted the nation's own political organization. Therefore, opposition movements used Brazil's involvement in the conflict as proof that it

---

<sup>154</sup>Michael L. Conniff. "Brazil's Populist Republic and Beyond", in *Populism in Latin America*, ed. Michael L. Conniff, The University of Alabama Press, 1999. Williams, Daryle. *Culture Wars in Brazil: The First Vargas Regime, 1930–1945*. Duke University Press. Levine, Robert M. *Father of the Poor? Vargas and his Era*. Cambridge University Press, 1998. Fausto, Boris. *Getulio Vargas*. Companhia Das Letras, 2006.

<sup>155</sup>Fausto, Boris. *História do Brasil*. Editora da Universidade de Sao Paulo, 1994.

<sup>156</sup>Couto, Ronaldo Costa. *Brasília Kubitschek de Oliveira*. Editora Record, 2010.

<sup>157</sup>Hilton, Stanley E. *Brazil and the Great Powers, 1930-1939*. University of Texas Press, 1975.

was time to change from a dictatorship to democracy, and issued a manifesto in 1943, demanding new elections.<sup>158</sup>

That same year, university students organized against government censorship, clamoring for a new democratic structure. Finally, opposition within military ranks, and the nomination of a popular figure, Major Eduardo Gomes, as a future presidential candidate further pressured Vargas into scheduling new elections for 1945. Meanwhile, Vargas' supporters launched a campaign<sup>159</sup> to install him as a permanent national leader, arguing that, as a popular and Populist president, he was expected to answer the people's call and run for the presidency. Fearing that Vargas might exploit such popular support from the masses to manipulate the political system and remain in power, the military opposition surrounded the presidential palace in October, 1945, and handed Vargas an ultimatum: resign peacefully or be forcibly removed from office. Sensing that his political support was waning, Vargas resigned and was replaced with a temporary government until the new elections occurred.<sup>160</sup>

In December, 1945, through a democratic process that involved six million votes,<sup>161</sup> three times as many as the country's last election, General Eurico Gaspar Dutra won election as president of Brazil. The following year, the country witnessed the establishment of yet another Constitution. During Congressional debate over its provisions, the issue of transferring the national capital returned, and after an intense political campaign by politicians from the state of Goiás, the government included in the 1946 Constitution an

---

<sup>158</sup>Fausto, Boris. *História do Brasil*. Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 1994.

<sup>159</sup>Campaign supporters were called *Queremistas* after their motto *Queremos Getúlio*, or "we want Getúlio." Skidmore, Thomas. *Politics in Brazil 1930-1945, an Experiment in Democracy*. Oxford University Press, 2007.

<sup>160</sup>Skidmore, Thomas. *Brazil Five Centuries of Change*. Oxford University Press, 2010.

<sup>161</sup>*Ibid.* p. 126.

article explicitly calling for construction of a new capital city to be located within Goiás' state boundaries.<sup>162</sup> However, the document did not mention any expected date for both construction and the transfer of political power to occur, leaving the mandate vague. To accelerate the project's execution, President Dutra created the Commission for Studies of the Location of the New Capital of Brazil, under the leadership of General Poli Coelho. The mission incorporated engineers, agronomists, geologists, and army officers, in charge of conducting further mapping of the area. In its final report, the Commission proposed that the construction site be expanded from the area originally determined by the previous mission Cruls. This meant that the government would build the capital within the limits of that larger area, and that the exact location would come to depend on political and private negotiations with state officials and local landowners.<sup>163</sup>

Although the Poli Coelho report clearly indicated a path for future development, any prospects for action on the capital's transfer stalled under bureaucratic impediments and political resistance. Representatives from Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo further delayed the project's execution by pressuring to reopen debate within the Brazilian Congress.<sup>164</sup> In 1952, according to data from a government census, only one third of Rio de Janeiro's population supported the relocation of the capital.<sup>165</sup> Likewise, the majority of the respondents preferred that the government concentrate on developing the coastal regions, instead of shifting the political center to the Brazilian heartland. Complicating the entire issue of moving the

---

<sup>162</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City an Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. The University of Chicago Press, 1989.

<sup>163</sup>Couto, Ronaldo Costa. *Brasilia Kubitschek de Oliveira*. Editora Record, 2010.

<sup>164</sup>Ibid.

<sup>165</sup>Wolfe, Joel. *Autos and Progress – The Brazilian Search for Modernity*. Oxford University Press, 2010. p. 134.

capital, 1950 brought a charismatic, yet controversial,<sup>166</sup> figure back into Brazil's political arena: Getulio Vargas.

### **Vargas Returns: 1950s**

After a shrewdly maneuvered campaign, Vargas won the presidential election in 1950, proving to his opposition that he had a vast and solid popular support. In 1953, as a continuation of his New State plans for territorial integration, Vargas created a new Commission for the Location of the New Federal Capital. That move aimed to satisfy supporters of the capital's transfer while strategically delaying any start of the actual construction. The new Commission, in turn, ordered a new expedition to re-evaluate and determine the capital's exact location within the previously selected area. This time, the expedition was the responsibility of an American firm, Donald Belcher & Associates.<sup>167</sup>

Starting in 1952, the popularity of the Vargas democratic regime started to wane due to the aggravation of Brazil's economic crisis. To counter those financial hurdles, the government issued a stabilization plan that, among other things, interfered directly in the commercialization of the country's main export product: coffee. As a response, the American market boycotted Brazilian coffee, a step that further accelerated the deterioration of the country's trade system.<sup>168</sup> The opposition's nationalist group accused the government of

---

<sup>166</sup>The controversy surrounding Vargas stems from the historiography's usual depiction of him as a popular political figure that, while boasting of significant popular support, reduced individual and labor rights to protest through censorship and union control. For more information on his polemic character see Levine, Robert M. *Father of the Poor? Vargas and his Era*. Cambridge University Press, 1998. And Hentschke, Jens R. *Vargas and Brazil: New Perspectives*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

<sup>167</sup>Couto, Ronaldo Costa. *Brasilia Kubitschek de Oliveira*. Eidtora Record, 2010.

<sup>168</sup>Michael L. Conniff. "Brazil's Populist Republic and Beyond", in *Populism in Latin America*, ed. Michael L. Conniff, The University of Alabama Press, 1999. And Skidmore, Thomas. *Politics in Brazil 1930-1945, an Experiment in Democracy*. Oxford University Press, 2007.

being too lenient with foreign interests, criticism that gained ample support from civil and military factions.<sup>169</sup>

Faced with such strong opposition, Vargas attempted to counteract by forming new political alliances. However, a cascading series of crises rapidly made his administration collapse. Allegations that his government had been involved in a murder attempt against a journalist and member of the opposition, Carlos Lacerda, added to mounting accusations of corruption to further undermine Vargas' support. Pressured into resigning, Vargas instead did the unimaginable: committed suicide. On August 24<sup>th</sup>, 1954, he pulled the trigger of his Colt revolver and died with a bullet to the chest. As an able manipulator of public opinion, he left a note stating that he had been unwillingly pushed into such a desperate position and that, as a victim, he would "take the first step on the road to eternity and leave life to enter history."<sup>170</sup> Ultimately, Vargas' death caused significant turmoil in Brazilian politics, and generated an unprecedented wave of popular unrest<sup>171</sup> that dramatically altered the country's political arena.<sup>172</sup>

Vargas' legacy was a country divided politically, but with greater territorial and national unity, a unity obtained through the greater bureaucratization of the country on "national, state, and local levels."<sup>173</sup> The Vargas approach had created national institutions

---

<sup>169</sup>Fausto, Boris. *História do Brasil*. Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 1994.

<sup>170</sup>Skidmore, Thomas. *Politics in Brazil 1930-1945, an Experiment in Democracy*. Oxford University Press, 2007, p.142.

<sup>171</sup>With the news of Vargas' suicide, public protestors attacked newspaper offices and the headquarters of the political opposition's coalition, blaming reports from journalists such as Carlos Lacerda, and internal political pressure of pushing Vargas into committing suicide. For more information, see Fausto, Boris. *Getúlio Vargas*. Companhia Das Letras, 2006. And Levine, Robert M. *Father of the Poor? Vargas and his Era*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.

<sup>172</sup>Fausto, Boris. *Getúlio Vargas*. Companhia Das Letras, 2006. Levine, Robert M. *The History of Brazil*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. Meade, Teresa A. *A History of Modern Latin America: 1800 to the Present*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

<sup>173</sup>Levine, Robert M. *The History of Brazil*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, p. 121.



responsible for a centralized administration of the country's finances, natural resources, foreign policy, fiscal system, educational structure, and industrial base, among other things. Through greater centralization, which the previous Oligarchic system did not witness, Vargas was able to implement his territorial policies aimed at promoting development of the interior. His administration made deliberate efforts to populate distant lands, relocate and manage villages and populations, and develop better communication and transportation services to further integrate the territorial unit of Brazil. In this sense, his efforts to modernize Brazil, including the country's interior regions, and incorporate them more fully into national politics and culture set the stage for future president Juscelino Kubitschek's plans for national development. But plans for moving the capital city to the interior still had not really advanced.<sup>174</sup>

Following Vargas' suicide, Vice President Café Filho was sworn in as President and promised to hold elections that same year. Among the presidential candidates was Juscelino Kubitschek, a stout supporter of economic development through both public and private investment, and national and foreign capital. The liberal party started a campaign to suspend the Constitution and cancel the elections under the allegation that Vargas' suicide would inevitably generate a revolution, a claim which was plausible due to the public state of commotion and riot that had followed Vargas' death.<sup>175</sup> However, elections occurred and, on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1955, Kubitschek won by a small margin, with only 36% of the electoral vote.<sup>176</sup>

---

<sup>174</sup>Clayton, Lawrence A; Connif, Michael L. *A History of Modern Latin America*. Wadsworth, 2005.

<sup>175</sup>Skidmore, Thomas. *Politics in Brazil 1930-1945, an Experiment in Democracy*. Oxford University Press, 2007. Rohter, Larry. *Brazil on the Rise: the Story of a Country Transformed*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

<sup>176</sup>Fausto, Boris. *Historia do Brasil*. Editora da Universidade de Sao Paulo, 1994.p. 420.

After the announced victory of Juscelino Kubitschek, members of the opposing parties, including Carlos Lacerda, launched a campaign against his presidential inauguration. The turbulent political atmosphere of Brazil suffered yet another blow: the death of President Café Filho due to cardiac arrest. Carlos Luz, the president of the House of Deputies and member of the opposition, temporarily replaced Filho. Brazilian political life was truly going through trying times and, fearing that the opposition might impede the elected candidate from occupying the presidency, General Henrique Teixeira Lott executed a “preventive” coup to guarantee Kubitschek’s inauguration. By mobilizing his troops around government buildings in Rio de Janeiro, Lott, along with his supporters, pressured the temporary president into resigning. His replacement, the president of the Senate, issued Congressional decrees that secured Kubitschek’s inauguration scheduled for the following year.<sup>177</sup> This marked the beginning of a government that was both innovative and controversial: the government of Juscelino Kubitschek.

### **Juscelino Kubitschek**

Born in Diamantina, a traditional town of Minas Gerais, in 1902, Kubitschek was able to cultivate close ties to Minas’ political elite from a young age. Trained as a doctor, his charisma and connections soon pushed him into a political career and in 1940 he was appointed Mayor of Belo Horizonte, the state capital. In 1950, he was elected Governor of Minas Gerais, a post in which he built his reputation as an innovator, due to ambitious

---

<sup>177</sup>Fausto, Boris. *Historia do Brasil*. Editora da Universidade de Sao Paulo, 1994. Skidmore, Thomas. *Politics in Brazil 1930-1945, an Experiment in Democracy*. Oxford University Press, 2007. Vianna, Helio. *Historia do Brasil*. Editora Melhoramentos, 1967.

construction and industrialization projects, and to his investment in the areas of transportation and energy supply, among others.<sup>178</sup>

Sworn into office on January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1956, after General Lott's preventive military coup, Kubitschek governed in line with his National Plan for Development, a program created by a body of technocrats who had supported him throughout his campaign. His ambition was to target specific developmental goals within five broader sectors, those being energy, transportation, basic industry, agriculture, and education. However, his main focus was undoubtedly on the first three areas, which led many to criticize his relative neglect of agricultural production and educational reform. To accomplish his developmental goals, Kubitschek counted on the junction of both private and public sectors, demonstrating his pragmatism and astute political maneuvering.<sup>179</sup>

The Kubitschek era became known for its economic boom, evident in the 80% industrial growth that the country witnessed from 1955 to 1961.<sup>180</sup> Sectors such as steel, mechanical, and transportation industries grew at impressive rates. This positive economic outcome was the result of a new large domestic market (arguably initiated by Vargas), greater production capacity in basic industries such as steel and iron, and a greater attraction of foreign investors to the growing Brazilian market. Essentially, this growth was a by-product of the import substitution model that began in the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, increased in the 1930s, and reached its apex by the mid-1950s.<sup>181</sup>

---

<sup>178</sup>Cohen, Marlene. *Juscelino Kubitschek, o Presidente Bossa Nova*. Editora Globo, 2005.

<sup>179</sup>Couto, Ronaldo Costa. *Brasília Kubitschek de Oliveira*. Editora Record, 2010. Wolfe, Joel. *Autos and Progress – The Brazilian Search for Modernity*. Oxford University Press, 2010.

<sup>180</sup>Fausto, Boris. *História do Brasil*. Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 1994.p. 427.

<sup>181</sup>Skidmore, Thomas. *Politics in Brazil 1930-1945, an Experiment in Democracy*. Oxford University Press, 2007.

Kubitschek's political model is also known as "developmentalist nationalism,"<sup>182</sup> and authors such as Thomas Skidmore support the use of this term over mere "developmentalism" since it reinforces the government's focus on a nationally-driven development program. A charismatic leader, Kubitschek believed that symbolism was an important tool in the quest for popular support and government stability. As president, he constantly used imagery in his speeches and campaign to foster a sense of destined national grandeur. In his view, it was Brazil's destiny to grow and modernize, and to overcome the social and economic impediments to its development.<sup>183</sup>

Through political alliances, Kubitschek aptly maneuvered foreign and national interests, as well as the public and private sectors. In what Skidmore calls "a delicate balancing act,"<sup>184</sup> Kubitschek pressed for fast industrialization by convincing often opposing parties that their investment and support were vital to the mission of national development. In his discourse, everyone had a calling and a role in building what he promised would be Brazil's brighter future. In this context, in 1955, he proposed yet another project, or "target" as he called it: the construction of a new capital.

The project of building Brasilia represented the opportunity for Kubitschek to leave his firm mark on Brazilian history. He would thus be the only president to follow a historic Constitutional decree that had, for years, called for the transfer of the capital. Furthermore, he would forever be remembered as the fearless dreamer who, against all odds, dared to accomplish what others had shied away from. However, his decision to begin construction

---

<sup>182</sup>The term essentially refers to a state-driven industrialization, aiming at fast economic growth and greater influx of foreign capital.

<sup>183</sup>Pires, Lucas Rodrigues de Motta. *O Brasil de Juscelino Kubitschek*. Editora Landy, 2006.

<sup>184</sup>Skidmore, Thomas. *Politics in Brazil 1930-1945, an Experiment in Democracy*. Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 167.

did more than just consolidate his legacy in the country's history. It also served as the perfect distraction from issues that had previously threatened successful presidencies: the challenges of pursuing agricultural reform and fighting rampant political corruption. Finally, by connecting the construction of Brasilia to his developmentalist nationalism approach, Kubitschek rhetorically positioned the new capital as the emerging epitome of Brazilian greatness: a new modernist city for an increasingly modern nation.<sup>185</sup>

### **Brasilia: The Promised Capital**

Construction of Brasilia began in 1956, and in practical terms, the large-scale project soon generated a sizable influx of foreign and national investments. With this growth, Brazil saw an increase in industrial production and commercial exchange. Jobs were created, production rose, and sectors such as infrastructure received a greater inflow of public investment. Planners knew, of course, that a city built in the heart of the Brazilian Central Plateau would require a better network of roads and a larger number of cars. This meant, among other things, a growth of the automobile industry, and during the 1950s and 1960s, companies such as Ford expanded their production in the country.<sup>186</sup> Such trends seemed to validate the arguments of Kubitschek and the technocrats: that the construction of Brasilia would provide a direct stimulus for greater production and work opportunities.

This economic development strategy brought potential political complications, however. With the increase in job vacancies starting around 1956, as a result of the

---

<sup>185</sup>Bertolli Filho, Claudio. *De Getulio a Juscelino*. Editora Atica, 2002. Holston, James. *The Modernist City an Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. The University of Chicago Press, 1989.

<sup>186</sup>Wolfe, Joel. *Autos and Progress – The Brazilian Search for Modernity*. Oxford University Press, 2010.

construction of Brasilia, Kubitschek had to deal with labor unions and wage settlements.<sup>187</sup> Brazil's urban working class had participated in political movements in the past, and benefitted from Vargas' Labor Laws passed during the 1930s.<sup>188</sup> It was by courting and controlling labor unions that Vargas had managed to raise notable popular support, and Kubitschek, well aware of the dangers of a love-hate relationship between the President and the working class, proceeded with caution. Aided by João Goulart, the Populist Vice President who controlled much of the labor union apparatus, he maintained strong populist tendencies. Furthermore, as historian Joel Wolfe adequately argues, "Brasilia represented an experiment in state Fordism that attempted to stimulate working-class consumerism by offering the highest wages in the nation and broad benefits..."<sup>189</sup>

Where Kubitschek faced greater opposition was with the urban middle class. For many who lived in the strong coastal states of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, the president's developmentalist philosophy shared many of the problems of the Vargas years, such as corruption and political favoritism. While middle-class Brazilians generally benefitted from Brazil's economic growth, they were also concerned with allegations of ill use of public money. Meanwhile, by 1959, inflation increased substantially, leading the middle class to vocalize its concerns.<sup>190</sup>

To ensure that he would finish his presidential term without fatal political opposition, Kubitschek sought to appease the country's military factions. He accomplished this by

---

<sup>187</sup>Hoston, James. *The Modernist City An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. The University of Chicago Press, 1989.

<sup>188</sup>Bertolli Filho, Claudio. *De Getulio a Juscelino*. Editora Atica, 2002.

<sup>189</sup>Wolfe, Joel. *Autos and Progress – The Brazilian Search for Modernity*. Oxford University Press, 2010, p.135.

<sup>190</sup>Fausto, Boris. *Historia do Brasil*. Editora da Universidade de Sao Paulo, 1994.

offering an increase in military stipend and, most importantly, by maintaining a moderate anti-Communist position. In order to appeal to a larger number of military officials, he reaffirmed his nationalist tendencies while embracing a pro-Americanist approach that preached development above all, but with foreign, non-Communist help. While Kubitschek managed to marginalize leftist elements and keep the political debate under control, he also seized an extreme right-wing newspaper, the *Tribuna da Imprensa*, published by Vargas' renowned enemy Carlos Lacerda. Therefore, by rejecting radicalism and extremes on both ends of the political spectrum, he pleased the political center, courted approval of a wide swath of both the public and the officer corps, and reassured foreign investors of Brazil's growing political stability.<sup>191</sup>

In spite of his efforts to maintain political balance and economic growth, the Kubitschek years left a legacy of financial hardship. The construction of Brasilia, and accompanying large-scale projects such as building a vast network of roads and highways, ultimately came at a price: inflation and debt. While such economic stress was a problem that plagued his presidential term from early on, it grew worse in the following years, and proved a difficult challenge to overcome. Thus, Kubitschek's successors inherited a country with significant foreign and national debts, and an increasingly fragile political system. It was only during Brazil's military dictatorship of 1964, that the country overcame its economic ailments in what became known as the "Economic Miracle."<sup>192</sup> However, despite

---

<sup>191</sup>Bertolli Filho, Claudio. *De Getulio a Juscelino*. Editora Atica, 2002. Fausto, Boris. *Historia do Brasil*. Editora da Universidade de Sao Paulo, 1994. And Skidmore, Thomas. *Politics in Brazil 1930-1945, an Experiment in Democracy*. Oxford University Press, 2007.

<sup>192</sup>For more on Brazilian military dictatorship see: Skidmore, Thomas. *The politics of military rule in Brazil 1964-85*. Oxford University Press, 1988. Fico, Carlos. *Alem do Golpe*. Editora Record, 2004. , Vianna, Helio. *Historia do Brasil*. Editora Melhoramentos, 1967. On public reaction and resistance to the military regime, especially outside Brazil, see: Green, James. N. *We cannot remain silent. Opposition to the Brazilian military dictatorship in the United States*. Duke University Press Books, 2010.

the financial burden placed on the nation's treasury by Kubitschek's monumental projects, the president had indeed finally established a new capital after decades of debate. Ultimately, Brasilia endured as a symbol of personal ambitions, united efforts, and national pride.

### **Brasilia: A Project for Kubitschek**

Like many politicians driven by the faith in national growth through territorial integration, Kubitschek was enthusiastic about the transfer of Brazil's capital even before his confirmation as presidential candidate. However, recognizing the scale of commitment that would be required for the execution of such an ambitious project, he approached it cautiously, and believed that such an endeavor would take about fifteen years to be completed, and was an effort for "an entire generation."<sup>193</sup> Kubitschek initially suggested that he would be open to the idea of starting construction if he had Congressional support.

A radical change in his position happened when, on April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1955, while campaigning in the backlands of Goiás, in the town of Jataí, Kubitschek gave a speech focusing on the importance of obeying Constitutional decrees. A local resident, Antonio Soares Neto, then asked if he intended to relocate the national capital to the country's interior. Sensing that by embracing the project of the relocation he would garner the support of the Brazil's central states,<sup>194</sup> he answered that he would in fact respect every article in the country's Constitution, including that which determined the transfer of its capital.<sup>195</sup> As he

---

<sup>193</sup>Tamanini, L. *Brasília : memória da construção*. 2nd ed. Brasília DF: Projecto Editorial, 2003.

<sup>194</sup>Minas Gerais and Goiania were already involved in battling over the location of the nation's new capital, even before Kubitschek included it in his Target Plan.

<sup>195</sup>Couto, Ronaldo Costa. *Brasilia Kubitschek de Oliveira*. Editora Record, 2010.



expected, following the meeting at Jataí, Kubitschek realized that the idea of moving forward with building a new capital aroused substantial popular enthusiasm. Legend aside, the project also offered him a practical way of inscribing his name in Brazil's history. He also realized that the full benefits of such an endeavor could only be reaped by the one who inaugurated the city. With this in mind, he took the strong position of not only proposing the project but also defending its completion during his presidential term.

To expedite the process he proposed a decree creating a federal entity to head the capital's construction. Once the final document was ready to be sent to Congress, Kubitschek's political advisors suggested that he sign the decree in an official ceremony in Goiânia, capital of the state of Goiás. This would bring more notoriety to the relocation project. Therefore, his team organized a quick trip to Goiânia, where he was met by state officials. Word that the President was finally going to sign an official project supporting the transfer of the capital to a location within Goiás leaked to the press, and the local government worked to rally public support. Leaders summoned heads of local organizations to meet the President at the airport, and they announced their intent to mount a full public ceremony, inviting all of Goiânia's population to participate in such a historic moment. However, fate has its own agenda; a dense fog enveloping the city prevented the airplane carrying the President and his committee from landing in Goiânia. Instead, it landed in the small airport of Anápolis, a neighboring town. There, Kubitschek met with a small number of people and, pressed by his tight schedule, signed the document in an improvised ceremony. Despite the setback, the intention of building a new capital city in Brazil's

interior was now official, and widespread publicity emphasized that the project might now evolve from the political drawing board to practical execution.<sup>196</sup>

Even with Kubitschek's endorsement, controversy still reigned over exactly where the new capital should be built. In particular, the states of Goiás and Minas were both campaigning to be chosen as the new location, an ongoing battle that lasted decades. Since the statement in the 1891 Constitution that the capital should be moved to the Central Plateau, both states had fervently debated where the actual construction would take place. Minas' supporters argued that the state already had a noteworthy infrastructure of railways, roads, and a strong political and commercial tradition. On the other hand, Goiás was known for its greater centrality, and its supporters claimed that harboring the new capital would foster regional development. The state also benefitted from the "Mission Cruls" findings from 1892, which had favored locating a new capital in the heart of Goiás and suggested the city's current longitudinal and latitudinal references. Furthermore, Goiás advocates claimed that Bosco's divine vision indicated the nation's Central Plateau as the civilizing point, an argument which served as ultimate evidence of the state's natural favorability. Finally, after a long debate and political negotiations with the interested parties, Kubitschek's government decided that the site for the new city would be in the state of Goiás, close to Goiânia and Anápolis.<sup>197</sup>

As the next necessary step in the execution of the construction project, on September 19<sup>th</sup>, 1956, Brazilian Congress authorized the creation of a federal agency, named Novacap,

---

<sup>196</sup>Bojunga, Claudio. *JK, o artista do impossível*. Rio de Janeiro, Objetiva, 2001. Couto, Ronaldo Costa. *Brasília Kubitschek de Oliveira*. Editora Record, 2010. Heliodoro, Afonso. *JK Exemplo e Desafio*. Brasília, Thesaurus, 1991. Kubitschek, Juscelino. *Porque Construí Brasília*. Rio de Janeiro, Bloch Editores, 1975.

<sup>197</sup>Couto, Ronaldo Costa. *Brasília Kubitschek de Oliveira*. Editora Record, 2010. And Tamanini, L. *Brasília: memória da construção*. 2nd ed. Brasília DF: Projecto Editorial, 2003.

responsible for the construction process. Founded as an autonomous administrative organ, Novacap was directly under presidential guidance giving it a favoritism and administrative freedom that helped grease the wheels and eliminate some of the most troublesome, time-consuming bureaucratic elements of its operation. Since the agency was somewhat liberated from bureaucratic and political entanglements, construction began in 1957, and followed a fast and efficient pace.<sup>198</sup>

### **Opposition and Support**

Even after Brazil's government had set up an agency to direct construction, there were still significant political parties and social groups in the country that had reservations about the idea of building a new capital. Many continued to question the need for a new city and, looking at the high estimates of its costs, harshly criticized any such national commitment of expenditures. Others, especially groups from the current capital of Rio de Janeiro, feared losing political clout after the transfer of the country's center of power to the backlands. To counter opposing arguments, Kubitschek relied on his Target Plan and promised that other target areas would also benefit from his "Target-Synthesis,"<sup>199</sup> as he called Brasilia. Furthermore, he argued that having a new capital center would generate national integration and regional development. The President also sought to galvanize support for his ideas by using the slogan "integration through interiorization" in his campaign, which was also a product of his drive to consolidate "democracy through developmentalism" in Brazil.<sup>200</sup> Ultimately, he maintained that the new capital would

<sup>198</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. The University of Chicago Press, 1989.

<sup>199</sup>His campaign was based on a Target Plan which constituted of several target areas. Brasilia was the Target-Synthesis since from it would stem the development of other areas.

<sup>200</sup>Wolfe, Joel. *Autos and Progress The Brazilian Search for Modernity*. Oxford University Press, 2010. p. 136.

generate a new national space through greater territorial unity, and initiate a new national era by marking Brazil's emergence as a truly modern nation. By developing and integrating the nation, Kubitschek argued, building a new capital would help consolidate Brazil's fragile democratic system.

In order to achieve his goals of development and national union, Kubitschek proposed what Holston calls a "development inversion,"<sup>201</sup> the notion that by connecting the interior to the coastline and by transferring the country's political center, the Central West region would rise to the same level of development that the Southeast enjoyed.<sup>202</sup> In other words, Brasilia would serve as a center of national development, spreading progress, nationalism, and democracy.<sup>203</sup> Despite Kubitschek's passionately articulated campaign for a new capital city, his opposition continued to question whether construction would begin or warned that, if started, the huge project would probably not be completed in the proposed timeframe. Understandably, the idea of building an entire city in four years aroused skepticism in many, who saw the project as merely a means of increasing national expenditures and cynically speculated about selfish interests pocketing large amounts of public money. In fact, allegations of corruption were constantly making headlines, and such accusations targeted everyone from higher ranking politicians to local administrative officials in charge of the actual construction work. Thus, the shadow of corruption lingered over Brasilia's history from the very beginning.<sup>204</sup>

---

<sup>201</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. The University of Chicago Press, 1989, p.18.

<sup>202</sup>The Southeast region holds the states and cities of Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

<sup>203</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. The University of Chicago Press, 1989.

<sup>204</sup>Such allegations of corruption are discussed in newspaper articles, obtained from the Public Archives of the Federal District, or *Arquivo Publico do GDF*, throughout the construction years. This issue is also discussed, if only briefly, in Couto, Ronaldo Costa. *Brasilia Kubitschek de Oliveira*. Editora Record, 2010. And Tamanini,

Fear of corruption and of exorbitant expenses appeared as early as 1956, when the plans for Brasília's construction were still in their initial stages. In its October edition, for instance, the São Paulo newspaper *Folha da Manhã* claimed that the endeavor would certainly cost more than Brazil could afford, and that the new capital would forever be remembered as the “most expensive capital in the world, in a country of famished people.”<sup>205</sup> On other occasions, the same newspaper accused Kubitschek of using the transfer of the capital as a way to distract attention from other pressing national matters. In this early stage, critics also articulated their opposition to Brasília and the President in broader terms, complaining that the necessary highways, buildings, and a complete railroad network would require more than four years to be built. In all, they insisted, shifting the nation's power from Rio de Janeiro, the center of Brazilian cultural and political life, to the interior, where there was supposedly nothing but Indians and an untamed natural plateau, was an insane and absurd notion.

But by the following year, 1957, the construction of Brasília had already gained momentum, and opponents realized that there was a chance, even if slim, that the project would take off. Newspapers printed articles debating the project's validity, while many observers still objected to the relocation. Most of the arguments against Kubitschek's plans remained the same, essentially a fear of over-spending, and a reluctance to change the country's political center and *status quo*. This was especially true in the case of newspapers from the Southeastern states, such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. In a January 1957 edition, the *Jornal do Brasil*<sup>206</sup> published an editorial which questioned the need for a new

---

L. *Brasília : memória da construção*. 2nd ed. Brasília DF: Projecto Editorial, 2003.

<sup>205</sup>*Folha da Manhã*, 10/1/1956. Found in Public Archives of the Federal District (*Arquivo Público do GDF*).

<sup>206</sup>Brazil's third oldest newspaper, and one with conservative tendencies.

capital, but stated that, if proven necessary, such a process required more gradual planning and a less rushed transition. The piece maintained that government should first develop the interior of Brazil by investing in schools, highways, and general infrastructure, and only then should it embark on the ambitious project of transferring the country's executive, legislative, and judiciary branches. In a later article, from August 28, 1957, a chronicler from the same journal argued that if Rio de Janeiro lost its status as capital, the entire city would be demoted to the category of Province, its society thus suffering the psychological and emotional pains of being merely "provincial."

Opposition wasn't limited to São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, but rather turned up in other media, such as *Folha do Norte*, a newspaper from Brazil's Northern region, which also considered the project to be an unnecessary waste of federal investment. Politically, Kubitschek and his ambitious "target" plans faced heavy opposition during this period from the UDN (National Democratic Union), led by Carlos Lacerda, and Kubitschek was constantly caught in the difficult battle of balancing political favors in Congress. In 1958, well after construction was underway, Brazilian Senator Othon Mader, also from UDN, proposed a law that would postpone Brasília's inauguration date from 1960 to 1970. This measure didn't pass, but represented one more effort in the opposition's attempts to hinder the construction and transfer processes.<sup>207</sup>

Critics also worried about Brasília's expected impact on the environment, specifically the Brazilian *cerrado*, or backlands. An article in *Jornal do Brasil*, published on January 4<sup>th</sup>, 1957, argued that the construction of Brasília was a valid project of national development,

---

<sup>207</sup>Cohen, Marlene. *Juscelino Kubitschek, o Presidente Bossa Nova*. Editora Globo, 2005. Couto, Ronaldo Costa. *Brasília Kubitschek de Oliveira*. Editora Record, 2010.

but that the government needed to conduct parallel environmental studies in order to ascertain that the consequent environmental damages would be minimal. Furthermore, the article called for a rational consideration of the pros and cons of building a city in a forested area, while the coast was already populated and developed. In the following year, *Correio da Manhã*<sup>208</sup> published a similar article accusing the government of speeding the desertification process through deforestation, and through the planned creation of an artificial lake in the new capital: Lake Paranoá. Headlines such as “Specter of the desert haunts Brasilia” described what critics said would become an “assassinated land.”<sup>209</sup> Critics sought to call attention to the possibility of negative environmental outcomes, accusing the Kubitschek government of ignoring such concerns.

Despite criticism of his presidency and of the project of Brasilia, Kubitschek was able to raise support for his construction mission through an ingenious use of symbolism and national appeal. When visiting the proposed location in 1956, he wrote an inscription in the “Golden Book”<sup>210</sup> for visitors:

From this Central Plateau, from this loneliness that will soon be transformed into the *brains* of national decisions, I cast my eyes to the country of tomorrow and predict this dawn, with an unbreakable faith and limitless trust in my country’s great destiny.<sup>211</sup>

In Kubitschek’s positioning, Brasilia would become the ultimate symbol of the country’s destined grandeur. Historically, he saw the country poised at a moment of

---

<sup>208</sup>Published on 8/25/1958.

<sup>209</sup>Articles from the August 25<sup>th</sup>, 1958 edition of *Correio da Manha* newspaper. Public Archives of GDF.

<sup>210</sup>A book in which official visitors could inscribe their thoughts of Brasilia, or just register their visit.

<sup>211</sup>Cited and reproduced in Tamanini 2009:139.

increasing nationalism. Previous governments had succeeded in establishing a significant industrial base, and with this, consumerism in Brazil had increased. Furthermore, the Vargas Era had left a legacy of patriotism, which helped centralize a nation once politically and culturally divided. This was the Brazil that Kubitschek inherited: a more unified society aware of the country's potential and challenges, clamoring for new political and economic guidance under the belief that Brazil's development was only beginning. Thus, with the promise of growth, Brasilia became the beacon of modernity, territorial integration, and national development.

A shrewd politician, Kubitschek knew how to manipulate the press and the population. As a populist leader, he revealed charisma and political savvy in speeches that called for political unity for national growth. By focusing on Brazil's vast territory and incipient infrastructure as the main obstacles for the country's development, Kubitschek diverted attention from allegations of corruption during his campaign and government, and summoned opposing political parties to join forces in a national effort for modernization. He promised that through the construction of a new capital, Brazil would finally be able to conquer "its abandoned lands...and [begin] walking towards the integration of its six million square kilometers that haven't yet heard the sound of human footsteps."<sup>212</sup>

Supporters of Brasilia quickly embraced his language and further expanded on the use of symbolism and poeticism when referring to the new city. For example, in 1957, an article in the newspaper *Estado de Minas* described the emerging capital as a "true revolution, giving meaning to the national civilization, spreading progress to the hinterland and

---

<sup>212</sup>Clipping from *Jornal do Brasil*, 12/17/1957. Public Archives of GDF.



redirecting traditional development from coastal areas.”<sup>213</sup> Another piece, from *Folha da Manhã*, declared that “the new capital is the dream of many generations of Brazilians. It is the hope of millions of creatures suffering with the physical and, above all, spiritual distance from the nation’s capital (Rio de Janeiro).”<sup>214</sup>

A third article, published in July, 1958, in the periodical *Diário Carioca*, argued that Brasilia was truly the epitome of the country’s modernization, and everyone’s patriotic mission was to support its construction. Thus “the idea of Brasilia has taken roots in the spirit of all men of good faith; those whose ultimate interest is to salvage from unproductivity a vast territorial extension.”<sup>215</sup> In yet another example, “...enthusiasm (for Brasilia) permeates every fiber of the good Brazilian in the intense desire that the nation’s heart, in between beats, can send through its arteries rich blood for the development of the more distant lands.”<sup>216</sup> The national press overall embraced Kubitschek’s justification for the project as a tool for building Brazil’s future; a December 1956 article in *Correio Paulistano* read: “It is the Brazil of tomorrow that we will build (...) it is a step towards the consolidation of our continental manifest destiny...”<sup>217</sup> With such stirring language, Kubitschek and his supporters were able to marginalize and outmaneuver the opponents of Brasilia.

The campaign for the support of Brasilia also used foreign articles as proof that the plans for a new capital were generating international recognition not only in terms of political and architectural development, but in terms of praise for the entire country in

<sup>213</sup> Clipping from *Estado de Minas*, 01/25/1957. Public Archives of GDF.

<sup>214</sup> Clipping from *Folha da Manhã*, 01/01/1957. Public Archives of GDF.

<sup>215</sup> Clipping from *Diário Carioca*, 07/01/1958. Public Archives of GDF.

<sup>216</sup> Clipping from *Jornal do Brasil*, 8/28/1957. Public Archives of GDF.

<sup>217</sup> Clipping from *Correio Paulistano*, 12/07/1956. Public Archives of GDF.

general. This perspective portrayed the transfer of the capital as a crucial component in Brazil's newfound manifest destiny; not only internal development, but also international renown. Headlines such as "Brasilia is today a postcard for foreign countries,"<sup>218</sup> "Thorough study from *Times* dedicated to the new Brazilian capital,"<sup>219</sup> and "Brasilia as part of an art exhibit"<sup>220</sup> are just a few of the many that permeated Brazilian press from 1956 to 1960. Regardless of the story covered in each article, the ultimate message was that Brasilia was a way for Brazil to attract more foreign interest and investments. This positive coverage seemed to prove Kubitschek's hopes that Brazil could gain stature as a new international power in a world of turbulent times; a message that was exceptionally clear in the images used on the following cover of an Argentine magazine featuring Brazil's latest developments:



**Figure 2.** "American Financial World", 1958. Cited in *Correio da Manhã*, 11/25/1958. Public Archives of GDF.

<sup>218</sup>Clipping from *Correio da Manhã*, 07/20/1958. Public Archives of GDF.

<sup>219</sup>Clipping from *Correio da Manhã*, 03/18/1958. Public Archives of GDF.

<sup>220</sup>Clipping from *Ultima Hora*, 12/30/1957. Public Archives of GDF.

This picture portrayed Brazil as seen as a growing industrial country, gaining and mastering impressive technology from shipbuilding to atomic research, under the guidance of President Kubitschek.<sup>221</sup> Other international articles on the construction of Brasilia also made headlines in Brazil, and served as positive propaganda of the government's success. For instance, boosters rejoiced upon seeing a Dutch article that stated that in Brasilia "the progressive man will free himself of his preconceived ideas in order to create a happier life for future generations."<sup>222</sup> To further increase the country's international fame, Brazil's Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized and funded several exhibitions in 1958, in cities such as Milan, Berlin, Amsterdam, Geneva, London, Paris, Brussels, Washington DC, and Chicago, describing the plans for the new capital and touting its wonders.<sup>223</sup> As another integral part of the government's efforts to attract international recognition and support, Kubitschek welcomed foreign presidents or government officials to visit the capital while under construction. Accepting that invitation, dignitaries such as U.S. official John Foster Dulles, the Japanese royal family, and Italian President Giovanni Gronchi all visited Brasilia (on separate occasions). Brazil's government widely publicized those visits and used them for positive propaganda, repeating Gronchi's remark that Brasilia was "worthy of the great Roman times."<sup>224</sup>

Kubitschek's speeches repeatedly compared construction of Brasilia to other impressive historic feats; at one point, he declared that the three main accomplishments of the twentieth century were the atomic bomb, the launch of Sputnik, and the construction of

---

<sup>221</sup>Also in the picture are the architectural curves of Brasilia's *Dawn Palace*, under Rio de Janeiro's *Sugarloaf Hill*. This represented the transfer of the capital during a moment of national development.

<sup>222</sup>Clipping from *A Marcha*, 2/7/1959. Public Archives of GDF.

<sup>223</sup>Clippings from *Correio da Manhã*, 10/16/1958. Public Archives of GDF.

<sup>224</sup>Clipping from *Diario Carioca*, 9/9/1958. Public Archives of GDF.

Brasilia, an assertion that appealed to Brazil's growing national pride.<sup>225</sup> However, in spite of the increasing support for the construction of the emerging new capital, the opposition continued to criticize Brasilia as a "pharaonic project."<sup>226</sup> Kubitschek's critics argued that he wanted to build the city for his own personal gain, and denounced the monumental buildings under construction as vivid representations of one man's megalomania. In response, the President and his supporters stated that the Egyptian pyramids were generally celebrations of a past, while Brasilia was a celebration and a symbol of Brazil's great future.<sup>227</sup> They also compared the "Western March" and Brasilia to the previous century's westward expansion of the United States, noting how settlement and development had been crucial to create an American identity, integrated from sea to sea. Their rhetoric suggested that since the United States had also walked a similar path of national integration and territorial conquest of civilization over wilderness, then it was a sign that Brazil was on the right track.<sup>228</sup> Despite his constant comparison between the Brazilian and American settlement processes, Kubitschek emphasized that Brazil was interested in merely emulating the United States' development,<sup>229</sup> and had no desire to become dependent on American industry and products, which further pleased Brazilian nationalists.

Symbolism regarding Brasilia wasn't restricted to the political and economic realms, but extended into religious language and meanings. As a Catholic and superstitious man, Kubitschek wasn't afraid of using his beliefs in order to gain greater popular support. In Latin America, religion was, and in many cases still is, interconnected with political and

<sup>225</sup>Clipping from *Correio de Manhã*, 02/10/1959. Public Archives of GDF.

<sup>226</sup>Clipping from *A Hora*, 5/8/1957. Public Archives of GDF.

<sup>227</sup>Clipping from *Correio da Manhã*, 01/01/1959. Public Archives of GDF.

<sup>228</sup>As seen in the 03/21/1959 article of *A Tribuna*. Public Archives of GDF.

<sup>229</sup>Wolfe, Joel. *Autos and Progress The Brazilian Search for Modernity*. Oxford University Press, 2010. p. 136.

social outcomes. This was clearly the case with mid-century Brazil, which explains why Kubitschek was adamant in gaining the Church's support for the construction of Brasilia. In this sense, Bosco's prophecy was the primary tool in generating public support from both the religious and popular sectors of Brazilian society. To demonstrate the support of the Catholic Church for the construction of the new capital in May, 1957, church leaders organized the first Mass in Brasilia. At that ceremony, members of the regional Diocese spoke about the links between faith, nationalism, and evangelism. One speech declared:

...to envelop in faith and spirituality the vital center of Brazil's future political life...identifying with it the origins of Brazilian nationalism, as the discovery of Brazil was carried out under the impulse of extending the faith (in Christ)... that the country's main city (Brasilia) may rise around the Cross of Christ.<sup>230</sup>

The rhetoric employed religious symbols, such as the Christian cross and the call for evangelism, to give the ambitious project of building a city and transferring the nation's capital a final sense of legitimacy. In a country of superstition and strong religious beliefs, having the Church's blessing and involving the mission of spreading Christ's word through the further development of Brazil's interior meant the consolidation of public popular support. The Church's direct involvement in the project helped win over still more public support; it gave justification for building a new capital, in terms of a new sense of Christian mission and crusade. It also guaranteed the support of traditional and conservative elite families, and thus legitimized Brazil's destined greatness as also a byproduct of faith and

---

<sup>230</sup>Speech reproduced and cited in *Folha de Minas*, 5/51957. Public Archive of GDF.

divine intervention. The government thus had a social and religious calling: to develop and integrate the nation under the banner of Christ, and as a symbol of the country's great civilization. If the interior was a land of vast wilderness and Indians, the transfer of the capital would finally bring integration, civilization, and conversion.

In speaking with Catholic representatives in 1958, Kubitschek spoke about his personal faith, and about how his government was founded on religious principles and respect for divine authority. He tied those ideas into his political agenda, stating that “Brasilia and the Western March are both a work of faith.” He also compared the country's historical position at the mid-twentieth-century with the colonizing and missionary aspirations of the first Portuguese explorers and the Jesuit missions. Thus, he consolidated the imagery of Brasilia as a step towards greater territorial and national conquest, and connected both Brazil's and Brasilia's foundation myths: “we are once again facing a desert, contemplating a world that is ours but that we still need to conquer.”<sup>231</sup> With these words, Kubitschek left his audience with the imagery of the new capital as a promised land: Brazil's “new” Canaan.

#### CHAPTER 4. BRASILIA: NATIONALISM AND ARCHITECTURE

---

<sup>231</sup>*Diario Carioca*, 7/8/1958. Public Archive of GDF.

When examining the different meanings and implications of the term “modernism,” historians can engage a myriad of different manifestations, technical definitions, and national representations. However, despite the plurality of the word, it is possible to define a history of modernist architecture. That general trend, roughly beginning in the early twentieth century, desired to break from the classical canons of aesthetic and physical constructions, and it incorporated sociopolitical ideologies into the goals of design. Modernism drew on inspiration from Scientific Management, a movement originating in the United States in the early 1900s under the mentorship of Frederick Winslow Taylor, an engineer concerned with augmenting production and industrial efficiency. With that connection, modernist architects attempted to create a new aesthetics that had practical implications in society, production, and economics.<sup>232</sup>

In architecture, modernists emphasized order and balance achieved through the standardization of building processes and materials. They also stressed the need for careful planning that incorporated functional needs in visual designs, and the ultimate organization of architecture to avoid aesthetic eclecticism and excessive monumentality that had little or no concern for functionalism.<sup>233</sup> Thus, by adding social elements to their technical goals, modernist architects presented themselves as “organizers...who could ameliorate social

---

<sup>232</sup>For more information on Frederick Winslow Taylor and Scientific Management see: Nelson, Daniel. *Frederick W. Taylor and the Rise of Scientific Management*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1980. Biggs, Lindy. *The Rational Factory – Architecture, Technology, and Work in America’s Age of Mass Production*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002. And Hounshell, David A. *From the American System to Mass Production -1800-1932: The Development of Manufacturing Technology in the United States*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985.

<sup>233</sup>Guillen, Mauro F. *The Taylorized Beauty of the Mechanical: Scientific Management and the Rise of Modernist Architecture*. Princeton University Press, 2008.

conflict and improve standards of living.”<sup>234</sup> They were staunch critics of previous building techniques and styles that failed to use new material and technological advances to improve urban conditions. In this sense, Scientific Management offered them the necessary tools to analyze and try to solve social and urban ailments, by implementing order.

Another crucial element for the development of modernist architecture was the fast-paced industrial growth based on new, and more efficient, machines. Industrialization represented practical rationalization which resonated with the modernist quest for order and progress. Post-World War I disillusionment was also another transformative factor, especially shaping the European branch of modernist architecture. The Great War left a visible and tangible mark on the European continent in the form of destroyed cities, and wounded nationalisms.<sup>235</sup> Following the war, restoration meant more than the simple erection of buildings, and represented the necessary evaluation of people’s social, national, and even cultural organization. In this sense, architects and engineers, the skilled force responsible for European cities’ physical reconstruction, sought to embrace the moral implications of the task and thus added sociopolitical values to architectural and technical debates.

Ultimately, while it is possible to create a general definition and understanding of modernist architecture, it is important to comprehend that the concept also carried regional implications and different manifestations. Thus, for instance, in the United States, modernist architecture was closely related to, and dependent on, industrial growth and preferences,

---

<sup>234</sup>Guillen, Mauro F. *The Taylorized Beauty of the Mechanical: Scientific Management and the Rise of Modernist Architecture*. Princeton University Press, 2008, p.4.

<sup>235</sup>For more information of World War I and its impact on European culture, society, and artistic movements see: Eksteins, Modris. *Rites of Spring. The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*. Houghton Mifflin, 1989. And Fussel, Paul. *The Great War and Modern Memory*. Oxford University Press, 1975.



while in Europe it acquired greater ideological responsibilities.<sup>236</sup> Likewise, in Latin America, it reflected the influence of regional and cultural trends, which transformed it slightly from the original versions of its American and European counterparts. To better understand the transformative process behind Latin American modernist architecture, which in this study is represented by Brasilia, we must first grasp the complexities of its European model. In the specific case of Brazil's new capital, the most influential figure was Swiss architect Le Corbusier. Thus, this chapter will analyze his role in the development of European modernism and its effects on Brazilian architecture, a formative influence on Oscar Niemeyer and Lucio Costa, the designer and planner most responsible for the design and construction of the new modernist capital.

### **Le Corbusier and Modernist Architecture**

A city! It is the grip of man upon nature. It is a human operation directed against nature, a human organism both for protection and for work. It is a creation. Poetry also is a human act-the harmonious relationships between perceived images. All the poetry we find in nature is but the creation of our own spirit. A town is a mighty image which stirs our minds. Why should not the town be, even today, a source of poetry?<sup>237</sup>

With these words, Le Corbusier, a Swiss architect and founder of European architectural modernism, began his 1924 book titled "The City of Tomorrow and its Planning." The excerpt reflects the architect's belief that form, or beauty, was as necessary as

---

<sup>236</sup>*The Rational Factory – Architecture, Technology, and Work in America's Age of Mass Production*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002.

<sup>237</sup>Corbusier, Le. *The City of Tomorrow and its Planning*. Dover Publications, 1987.p. xxi.

functionality, represented by the image of the city as an organized human creation that imposes order over the natural world. It is precisely this quest for order, not only for beauty, that occupied the minds of many European artists, scientists, philosophers, architects, and engineers in the years following World War I. During that period, many Europeans felt an intellectual and social disillusionment with urban planning and city life. In response to the general considerations of cities as the locus of inequality, squalid housing, difficult transportation, poor hygiene, and strong class segregation, a new school in architectural thought emerged to propose solutions and a new experience in urban living. One of the main proponents of a new and revolutionary style in architecture was Le Corbusier.

Charles-Edouard Jeanneret, later known as Le Corbusier, was known as a meticulous man who valued precision in his creation and who “loved reality,” as one biographer has said.<sup>238</sup> The family story surrounding his birth in La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland, on October 6<sup>th</sup>, 1887, symbolically reflected his future meticulousness. His father wrote in his journal that his son’s “anticipated birth would be at 9 o’clock in the evening. As 9 sounded, the child was there.”<sup>239</sup> Later, Le Corbusier often told that story himself and also emphasized in his authorized biographies the influence of ancestry on his personal development. In such cases, he recounted proudly that his father and grandfather were “skillful enamellists of watch dials and clock-faces”<sup>240</sup> and that his mother descended from a line of highly successful merchants. In his teenage years, Jeanneret, as he was then known before he adopted the pseudonym of Le Corbusier, labored to be a clock-maker, but failed to stand out in the profession. He then moved on to studying art, but it was in architecture that he found

<sup>238</sup>Weber, Nicholas Fox. *Le Corbusier – A Life.* Alfred A. Knopf, 2008, p.19.

<sup>239</sup>Brooks, H. Allen. *Le Corbusier’s Formative Years: Charles-Edouard Jeanneret at La Chaux-de-Fonds.* University of Chicago Press, 1999, p.9.

<sup>240</sup>Weber, Nicholas Fox. *Le Corbusier – A Life.* Alfred A. Knopf, 2008, p.26.

his true calling, and the solution to his life-long question for beauty, harmony, order, and functionality.

In 1908, Jeanneret decided to move to Paris to pursue his professional and artistic aspirations.<sup>241</sup> Arriving in the French capital, he sought experienced architects and showed them his many sketches and designs. One encounter opened the way for his personal development. He met Auguste and Gustave Perret, two brothers who were in the construction business and specialized in the building of reinforced-concrete apartments, then an architectural novelty and engineering feat. The interior design of the Perret office complex greatly impressed Jeanneret, since it lacked internal structural columns, thus creating a greater sense of freedom and space. After he met the brothers and showed them his designs, they offered him a job as a blueprint drafter, which he readily accepted. The following months working with the Perrets influenced his architectural formation since they believed in functionality, use of modern building technology, with new material, and an appreciation for open spaces.<sup>242</sup>

From Paris, Jeanneret moved to Berlin and later Vienna and, still on his search for absolute beauty in architecture, the young artist decided to go on a tour of the Mediterranean, or the East, as he called it in his travel journal. Thus, in 1911, he set out on a self-seeking journey that lead him to both Greece and Turkey, where he explored local architecture, culture, and his own sexuality.<sup>243</sup> The first, for instance, had a strong impact on Jeanneret's future architectural tendencies. In his travel memoir *Journey to the East*, he

---

<sup>241</sup>Baker, Geoffrey H. *Le Corbusier – The Creative Search: The Formative Years of Charles-Edouard Jeanneret*. Taylor & Francis, 2000.

<sup>242</sup>Weber, Nicholas Fox. *Le Corbusier – A Life*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2008.

<sup>243</sup>Baker, Geoffrey H. *Le Corbusier – The Creative Search: The Formative Years of Charles-Edouard Jeanneret*. Taylor & Francis, 2000. And Zaknic, Ivan. "Le Corbusier's Epiphany on Mount Athos" In *Journal of Architectural Education* Vol. 43, No. 4 (1990) pp.27-36.

commented on how the many nights spent outside gazing at the vast and open sky gave him an almost obsessive admiration for the horizon that was later reflected in his designs: “I think that the flatness of the horizon...provides for each one of us a measure of the most humanly possible perception of the absolute.”<sup>244</sup>

On this same trip, his observations of native cultures generated in him a greater respect for nature and its nourishing characteristics. Thus, by watching how communities navigated around gardens and farmland, he developed the consciousness that a functional urban design required the junction of both growing spaces and living spaces.<sup>245</sup> Lastly, the voyage offered him the chance to discover the exotic pleasures of foreign traditions and women, and the mixture of architectural beauty and sexual desire permeated his artistic inclinations. Professionally, he would later view many of his and other modernists’ architectural constructions, as highly sensual and feminine, manifested either in the sensuousness of curves or in the practical masculinity behind straight lines and sharp angles.<sup>246</sup>

Returning to Europe after his journey abroad, Jeanneret was determined to work as a fully employed architect, despite lacking academic certification. He was not officially an architect, but felt compelled to transform himself into one not through theoretical studies, but through practice. Through his connections in the architectural and construction world, he received commissions for minor projects, mostly involving interior reformation. Artistically and philosophically he turned towards Modernism and, in 1918, published the

---

<sup>244</sup>Cited in Baker, Geoffrey H. *Le Corbusier – The Creative Search: The Formative Years of Charles-Edouard Jeanneret*. Taylor & Francis, 2000, p.169.

<sup>245</sup>Weber, Nicholas Fox. *Le Corbusier – A Life*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2008.

<sup>246</sup>Samuel, Flora. “A Profane Annunciation: The Representation of Sexuality at Ronchamp.” In *Journal of Architectural Education*, Vol. 53, No.2 (Nov. 1999). Pp. 74-90.

book *Beyond Cubism* that extolled, among other things, the need for a new, “orderly world in which science and art would function in tandem. Machinery, industrialization, and technology were the modern goals; paintings and architecture should reflect” them.<sup>247</sup>

In 1920, while Europe struggled to recreate itself after the Great War, Jeanneret went through two experiences that forever changed his life. The first was his encounter with his cousin Pierre Jeanneret who moved to Paris to study architecture at L'Ecole des Beaux-Arts. Pierre later became his business partner and, as a fully accredited architect, gave their enterprise formal legitimization. The second event was the publication of the magazine *L'Esprit Nouveau*, in which Jeanneret wrote several articles signed with his newly created pseudonym: Le Corbusier. The magazine's goal was to educate readers on the benefits and superiority of the new modernist style that preached precision and order, two factors Le Corbusier believed were highly needed for European urban, and social, reconstructions.<sup>248</sup> In his words, “The highest declaration of the human mind is the perception of order, and the greatest human satisfaction is the feeling of collaboration or participation in this order.”<sup>249</sup> Architecturally, *L'Esprit Nouveau* extolled the universal appeal and timelessness of “cubes, cones, spheres, cylinders, and pyramids” which, together with the use of lines, urban planning, and new building materials such as concrete, steel, and glass panes, became the foundation of modernist architecture.<sup>250</sup>

In 1922, after gaining increased notoriety through his designs and articles, Le Corbusier turned towards city planning.<sup>251</sup> This was not surprising, since his generation of

<sup>247</sup>Weber, Nicholas Fox. *Le Corbusier – A Life.* Alfred A. Knopf, 2008, p.165.

<sup>248</sup>Brooks, H. Allen. *Le Corbusier's Formative Years: Charles-Edouard Jeanneret at La Chaux-de-Fonds.* University of Chicago Press, 1999.

<sup>249</sup>Weber, Nicholas Fox. *Le Corbusier – A Life.* Alfred A. Knopf, 2008, p.177.

<sup>250</sup>Curtis, William J.R. *Le Corbusier: Ideas and Form.* Phaidon, 1986.

<sup>251</sup>Brooks, H. Allen. *Le Corbusier's Formative Years: Charles-Edouard Jeanneret at La Chaux-de-Fonds.* University of Chicago Press, 1999.

architects and engineers had witnessed the utter destruction of important European cities and neighborhoods during World War I and its bombings. It thus made sense to evaluate how physical reconstruction could occur in an improved and more efficient fashion. Critical of the chaotic organization of traditional urban centers, Le Corbusier envisioned the new and modern metropolis as an orderly center with an “immensity of space...the sky everywhere, as far as the eye can see” built with the new materials and techniques of city planning that were “sky, space, trees, steel, and cement in this order and in this hierarchy.”<sup>252</sup>

In 1923, now fully aware of the architectural trends he wanted to further pursue and develop, Le Corbusier published *Toward a New Architecture*, a compilation of articles that denounced and rejected past design trends and called for the consolidation of the modernist style. In it, he declared that architecture and urban planning had the power to execute social change and thus, through careful urban planning, architects and engineers could produce a true social revolution and order. Following this belief, in 1924 he created a new urban plan for Paris, which called for an almost entire erasure of some of its problematic centers and neighborhoods, which were mostly affected by the unorganized flow of automobiles, bicycles, and pedestrians, and by high criminality rates. At the core of his new proposal was his intense dislike for the negative effects of the automobile. For him, “to leave your house meant that once you had crossed the threshold you were a possible sacrifice to death in the shape of innumerable motors.”<sup>253</sup> Thus, with this new and ambitious project in mind, he presented his Parisian reconstruction, called *Le Plan Voisin*, at the International Exposition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts held in Paris on April, 1925. Not surprisingly, the

---

<sup>252</sup>Weber, Nicholas Fox. *Le Corbusier – A Life*.” Alfred A. Knopf, 2008, p.186.

<sup>253</sup>Weber, Nicholas Fox. *Le Corbusier – A Life*.” Alfred A. Knopf, 2008, p.214.

plan met with ridicule from most observers, who considered it folly, a radical disrespect to the capital's historical past and architecture.

Despite popular rejection of his *Plan Voisin*, Le Corbusier was invited, in 1926, to submit a project for the architectural design of the League of Nations' headquarters, to be constructed on the shores of Lake Geneva, Switzerland. His design introduced a new architectural novelty: building slabs that were raised on *pilotis*, ground-level support columns that generated a sense of open space and allowed an individual to see, when approaching and entering a building, the horizon beyond the structure.<sup>254</sup> After a long professional and public debate about which design to adopt, authorities eliminated Le Corbusier's proposal, a rejection he bitterly attributed to political and bureaucratic rivalries and to narrow-minded conventional thinkers attempting to thwart innovative modernism. However, the technical debate surrounding the League of Nations' jury board's decision gave Le Corbusier greater notoriety and fame.<sup>255</sup> From this increasing popularity came important connections that in June, 1928 led him to organize a group to represent and homogenize modern architecture.

This group, which became known as the *Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne* (CIAM), brought together prominent European architects concerned with issues such as the need for standardizing architectural production, increasing the efficiency of modern construction techniques, and evaluating the roles of both state and society in modern urban planning. Essentially, the CIAM served as a propaganda tool for furthering the development of the modernist architecture movement in an attempt to attract supporters and to fight conventionalism. In other words, its proposals represented an antithesis to

---

<sup>254</sup>Colquhoun, Alan. *Modern Architecture*. Oxford University Press, 2002.

<sup>255</sup>Curtis, William J.R. *Le Corbusier: Ideas and Form*. Phaidon, 1986.

traditionalist architecture, and reflected the influences of technology, technocracy, and the awe-inspiring speed of the machine age. Part of the movement's proposition included the search for greater efficiency in urban functionalism and structure, and social organization through architectural planning.<sup>256</sup>

In its initial stage, ranging from 1928 to 1933, CIAM emerged as a collective effort that, while attempting to remain politically neutral in a world increasingly polarized, focused on the connections between architecture, urban planning, rationalization, economics, and politics. Firmly believing that an architect's role was to transform surrounding cityscape and society, the movement's original members, including Le Corbusier, argued for "standardization and a more equitable distribution of wealth in terms of low-cost, mass housing."<sup>257</sup> While the group never officially sided with a specific political ideology, nevertheless it was greatly influenced by the political world in which it operated. With the intensification of European political polarization, the movement witnessed an exodus of what architectural historian Eric Mumford called the "German-speaking architectural left", most of whom migrated to the Soviet Union.<sup>258</sup>

In 1933, CIAM leaders organized a meeting known as CIAM 4, held onboard a ship cruising the Mediterranean, where Le Corbusier and other architects discussed the future of architecture and urban planning. After reflecting on existing urban problems such as crime, bad transportation and poor material distribution, group members concluded that such ailments could only be overcome through rational planning based on functionalism and

---

<sup>256</sup>Guillen, Mauro F. *The Taylorized Beauty of the Mechanical: Scientific Management and the Rise of Modernist Architecture*. Princeton University Press, 2008. Mumford, Eric. *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928-1960*. The MIT Press, 2002.

<sup>257</sup>Mumford, Eric. *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928-1960*. The MIT Press, 2002, p. xii.

<sup>258</sup>Author James Holston mentions how the movement attracted members of both the political Left and Right, as well as trade unionists, "Muscovite collectivists, Italian fascists" and technocrats in general. Holston 1989:41.



efficiency. To reflect that notion, this group adopted the term “The Functional City”, an idealized vision of future urban life that reflected a Corbusian focus on the transformation of the city into a more legible, navigational, and structured entity. Le Corbusier believed that through the planned imposition of order, zoning, and grid-like infrastructure, architecture could transform urban disorder into homogeneity, fluidity, and functionalism, thus improving social conditions.<sup>259</sup>

Le Corbusier proceeded to publish several short articles around the same theme of the “Functional City” and later, in 1943, published the “Athens Charter” stating and discussing the conclusions of the CIAM 4 meeting. Eric Mumford has called this the core of “Corbusian mythology which saw its task as creating a suprapolitical urbanistic order.”<sup>260</sup> The “Charter” established four major functions of new urban planning: housing, recreation, work, and traffic, and stipulated that urban organization should design a separate zone according to each. This method would inevitably promote order and efficiency.<sup>261</sup> The Athens Charter also called for the incorporation of fast-paced transportation infrastructure that, instead of strangling the city, would liberate it through the construction of large speedways intersecting the city and efficiently connecting the different zones. After all, the ultimate goal of city planning was functionalism, and so urban designers should use modern technologies to facilitate production and urban life, not stifle it.

To Le Corbusier and other promoters, this design vision represented a salvation from human nature’s degradation and social corruption. They believed that old-style industrial

---

<sup>259</sup>Bridge, Gary; Watson, Sophie. “Introducing Urban Politics and Planning” In *The Blackwell City Reader*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

<sup>260</sup>Mumford, Eric. *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928-1960*. The MIT Press, 2002, p.91.

<sup>261</sup>Khan, Hasan-Uddin; Beinart, Julian; Correa, Charels. *Le Corbusier: Chandigarh and the Modern City*. Mapin Publishing, 2010.

capitalism had created disorganized urban centers, with unruly masses sharing a space where social tensions and interests clashed constantly. Cities grew according to random immigration movements and settlement, morphing into unplanned forms and resulting in disorderly structures. This process generated an urban context in which entire neighborhoods were compromised by what the European elite considered moral depravity and social corruption, evident in the proliferation of problematic areas such as prostitution zones. It was in this context that modernists defined “the functional city” as a solution, and called for the assertion of “collective action and collective rights over private interests both in ordering the city and in managing the forces of industrial development.”<sup>262</sup>

Overall, CIAM criticized large existing urban centers in Europe and elsewhere, including Latin America, for lacking the production units and administrative structure required for a balanced industrial development. Instead, unplanned capitalist growth had resulted in subsequent unplanned urban growth and greater class distinction. Consequently, urban centers could not accommodate the massive influx of migrants drawn by industrial labor. As a result, the city and its subsections expanded uncontrollably, and the negative effects of this process, such as sexual depravity, violence, and even disease, spread like an epidemic. Thus, according to Le Corbusier, the city stopped being a healthy organism, and in Holston's appropriate analogy, entered the “final phase of a fatal malady: its circulation clogged, its respiration polluted, its tissues decaying in their own noxious wastes.”<sup>263</sup>

---

<sup>262</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. 1st ed. University Of Chicago Press, 1989, p.41.

<sup>263</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. 1st ed. University Of Chicago Press, 1989, p.44.

Le Corbusier and CIAM were not the first observers, of course, to address the architectural problems of overcrowded urban centers with social clashes and contagious disease epidemics. Before CIAM, in the late nineteenth century, movements such as Ebenezer Howard's Garden City Association had already searched for plausible solutions to urban ailments and promoted the creation of autonomous greenbelts surrounding industrial centers and urban settlements. Taking a wider philosophical perspective, Le Corbusier focused on order, discipline and functionality as tools for overcoming social ailments and taming natural environment.<sup>264</sup> In his view, the main problem lay in the obstacles hindering an egalitarian enjoyment of capitalism's and industrialism's benefits. Consumerism was not the problem, but the uneven social organization resulting from it was. He criticized capitalism as the driving force behind this urban and social imbalance, precisely because it placed private interests and ownership ahead of collective needs. This was true especially when it came to land use and distribution. Private ownership rights often hindered plans for urban expansion and improvement, something Le Corbusier found completely unacceptable. In his view, the collective need for better city structures legitimized state intervention, including actions by governments to expropriate necessary land. In his words:

Mobilization of private property, whether built on or not, is a fundamental condition of any planned development of Cities...in order to provide liberty for the individual and all the benefits of collective action...contemporary society must have the entire land surface of the country at its disposal.

---

<sup>264</sup>As discussed in Lewis Mumford's *City in History*.

[This] does not mean doing away with private property...it means improving the assets represented by our land for the benefit of mankind.<sup>265</sup>

CIAM's proposals for modernity often revolved around the metaphor of the machine, not only in terms of fast-paced technological advances, but also when considering the city itself. Other movements, especially in the post-World War II age, viewed technology with a certain dread and pessimism. Authors such as Lewis Mumford argued that the intensive use of technological development created a system of dependence and social (and even emotional) alienation.<sup>266</sup> Mumford criticized the economic, cultural, and environmental implications of mechanical advances, reminding people that change was not always positive. Le Corbusier, on the other hand, perceived the machine as the actual solution to society's ailments, writing, "The machine will be seen for what it really is, a servant and not a ruler, a worker and not a tyrant, a source of unity and not of conflict, of construction and not of destruction."<sup>267</sup> In this sense, CIAM architects believed that technology acted as a liberating force which, if efficiently harnessed, could free mankind from the drudgery of manual and time-consuming labor. In an efficient system, production could be increased and distribution of wealth and quality services could reach the masses.

The modernist conception of the city as a machine extended beyond the simple consideration of a city's functions and zones, mainly for housing, work, and leisure, to shape these architects' ideas about how urban organization affects social structure. For the purpose of redefining and controlling social functions and thus generating social change, CIAM's

---

<sup>265</sup>CIAM's *Athens Charter*. Cited in Holston, James. *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. 1st ed. University Of Chicago Press, 1989, p.45.

<sup>266</sup> Mumford, Lewis. *Myth of the Machine: Technics and Human Development*. Mariner Books, 1971.

<sup>267</sup>Le Corbusier in *The Radiant City*. Cited in Holston 1989:51.

proposals assumed that good design could improve society by creating urban areas and by clearly defining their functions within the scope of a carefully designed master plan. Therefore, through the use of architecture and city planning, this technocratic mentality embraced the great mission of reordering social structure and thus reinventing a new, and grand, civilization. This architectural determinism of sorts, more precisely environmental determinism, colored the language and discussions of CIAM's *Athens Charter*.<sup>268</sup>

In the aftermath of CIAM 4 and of World War II, both CIAM and Le Corbusier gained popularity and recognition, the latter's fame culminating in his appointment to help design and build the new United Nations headquarters in New York City in 1947. Despite the architect's prominence, the movement gradually lost its appeal after it became clear that CIAM's futuristic and modern planning could not in fact solve all the problems of traditional urban structure. By the 1960s a younger generation of professionals mounted a strong criticism of the seemingly detached relationship between the new modernist cities and their inhabitants. For instance, journalist Jane Jacobs wrote several influential works that firmly rejected the artificiality of Corbusian architectural planning and the repressive imposition of urban order, suppressing what she believed was valuable spontaneous interaction between the city and its city-dwellers.<sup>269</sup>

By the late 1950s, a younger generation of architects had even pushed Le Corbusier out of CIAM. Those new thinkers wanted to revitalize the movement for modernist architecture, but saw Corbusian propositions as outdated, cold, and inadequate to meet

<sup>268</sup> Mumford, Eric. *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928-1960*. The MIT Press, 2002.

<sup>269</sup> For more information on this theoretical debate against rigid urban planning along modernist lines see: Prakash, Gayan; Krue, Kevin M. *The Spaces of the Modern City. Imaginaries, Politics, and Everyday Life*. Princeton University Press, 2008. Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Modern Library, 2011. And Scott, James C. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. Yale University Press, 1999.

postwar social and political conditions. By 1960, CIAM meetings ended,<sup>270</sup> but Le Corbusier outlived the movement and continued to influence architecture and urban planning until his death in 1965.<sup>271</sup> But during the peak of its influence, CIAM put forward a powerful argument that architecture could and should transform the social structure by reshaping the physical environment. As Eric Mumford has observed:

CIAM defined a new and perhaps overly ambitious socially transformative role for architects and architecture by combining certain design strategies with a passionately held conviction that architecture should serve the many and not the few.<sup>272</sup>

Regardless of technical or ideological criticism, CIAM and Le Corbusier played a vital role in shaping twentieth-century architecture and urban design. While he did not personally design Brasilia, its creation is living proof of how influential his ideas were across international borders.

### **Modern Architecture in Brazil**

Due to colonial ties and the custom of studying in foreign universities, Latin America's elites of the early twentieth-century closely followed European fashion, as well as cultural, political, and even architectural trends. New tendencies such as modernist architecture, which directly questioned the traditional French Classicism style of Latin American cities, only developed after important social and political transformation. Especially in the case of Brazilian modernism, the shift in an architectural style occurred

---

<sup>270</sup>Mumford, Eric. *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928-1960*. The MIT Press, 2002.

<sup>271</sup>Weber, Nicholas Fox. *Le Corbusier – A Life*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2008.

<sup>272</sup>Mumford, Eric. *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928-1960*. The MIT Press, 2002, p.5.

with the introduction of nationalist and populist governments in the 1930s and 1950s, such as the Vargas Era and Kubitschek's presidency. In both cases, the state assumed a greater presence in social and cultural developments, which helped push forward grand projects of nation building and architectural reform.<sup>273</sup>

Traditionally educated in American or European universities, Brazilian elites tended to adopt foreign tendencies in order to justify their sense of social and cultural superiority over lower classes, and to legitimize their control of political power. As representatives of the educated class, many felt inherently entitled to run the country.<sup>274</sup> Concerned with justifying their intellectual superiority, and in search of a national artistic expression that reflected their country's distinct character, a group of Brazilian intellectuals and artists organized the *Semana de Arte Moderna*, or "Week of Modern Art" held in Sao Paulo from 11 to 18 February, 1922.<sup>275</sup>

The event, which included lectures, exhibits, and festivals, was meant to both scandalize the public, especially the more conservative elite, and to question the conformity of Brazilian artistic production to European styles. In truth, it was as much a rebellion by the younger artistic generation of Sao Paulo as it was a true intellectual and political statement. Furthermore, it also reflected the geographic and cultural dichotomy between the established political center of Rio de Janeiro, and the financial and industrially aspiring center of Sao Paulo. Thus, it made sense that it was in the latter that a movement towards modernity gained force. Finally, as author Leslie Bethell stated, the Week of Modern Art in

---

<sup>273</sup>Guillen, Mauro F. *The Taylorized Beauty of the Mechanical: Scientific Management and the Rise of Modernist Architecture*. Princeton University Press, 2008.

<sup>274</sup>Fraser, Valerie. *Building the New World: Modern Architecture in Latin America*. Verso, 2001.

<sup>275</sup>Nunes, Zita. *Cannibal Democracy: Race and Representation in the Literature of the Americas*. University of Minnesota Press, 2008.

Sao Paulo “helped art catch up to the idea of Brazil,”<sup>276</sup> thus reflecting the desire of molding current trends into something truly unique to the Brazilian context. The meeting also launched a movement of cultural cannibalism, called *Anthropofagia*, which referred to the conscientious adaptation of international concepts and styles to the national culture. In this sense, the movement defined its relationship with European cultural trends as a form of “ritualized violence, of deliberate, selective ingestion, by which the foreign product was transformed into something entirely Brazilian.”<sup>277</sup>

Within this framework, Brazilian thinkers approached modernist architecture with a similar inclination to assimilate and “digest” European style. Key government officials embraced the new design as a symbol of their commitment to economic strength and modernization; by following and adopting modern European architectural trends, governments were able to appear modern and justify their power. This trend contrasts with both American and European modernist architectures. According to Fraser, modernist architecture in the United States sought to incorporate elements of Scientific Management due to its closer connection to the industrial sector. Thus, its primary goal was practicality, efficiency, and productivity, with strong ties to the commercial and business world. Its European counterpart, on the other hand, had a greater concern for the aesthetic element of functionalism, and was influenced by the artistic world and tendencies. By comparison, modernist architecture in Latin America generally had an underlining political agenda, and was often used as government propaganda of national growth and development. This explains why, in Brazil, the movement took off under the centralized governments of Vargas

---

<sup>276</sup>Bethell, Leslie. *Ideas and Ideologies in Twentieth Century Latin America*. Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 19.

<sup>277</sup>Fraser, Valerie. *Building the New World: Modern Architecture in Latin America*. Verso, 2001, p.9.



and the populism of Kubitschek, two presidential mandates that wanted real modernization while openly advertising the government's achievements.<sup>278</sup>

Latin America's infatuation with the latest European trends fostered Le Corbusier's influence on its architecture, an inclination heightened by his many trips to the region. He was often invited to lecture and speak at conferences, which increased his notoriety and helped convert many within the professional circle of Latin American architects to share his belief in the transformative power of architecture. When Le Corbusier came to Sao Paulo during his 1929 Latin American tour, Brazilian novelist Oswald de Andrade, one of the main participants of the Modern Art Week, told him that "[in Brazil] we study you, along with Freud and Marx. You're on the same level and just as indispensable to the study of the present social movement and to the establishment of a new community organization."<sup>279</sup> Such praise greatly appealed to Le Corbusier's ego and confirmed that Brazilian modern intellectuals appreciated the Swiss architect as an exponent of European innovation and as a producer of social, physical, and cultural transformations. For Sao Paulo's *paulista*<sup>280</sup> elite, caught up in the continuous process of developing a stronger national identity, this vision of architectural modernism suited their goals.

Despite the strong interest in European architecture among Latin American style leaders, a scarcity of new materials such as glass, steel, and reinforced concrete in the early 1900s limited how quickly the continent could pursue design modernism. In Brazil, for instance, it was only after 1930 and with Vargas' dictatorship that the country developed its basic industry sector, which included the creation of a national steel company founded in

---

<sup>278</sup>Fraser, Valerie. *Building the New World: Modern Architecture in Latin America*. Verso, 2001.

<sup>279</sup>Weber, Nicholas Fox. *Le Corbusier – A Life*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2008, p.307.

<sup>280</sup>Referring to those from the city of Sao Paulo, as opposed to *Cariocas* from the city of Rio de Janeiro.

1941.<sup>281</sup> This late development explains the rather slow progression of modernist architecture in the country. In addition to lacking mass production of basic building materials; the region also lacked specialized labor. Consequently, the adoption of new technology and the knowledge for using new materials in the construction of modernist buildings depended on the skills of foreign professionals, and were first introduced in Brazil by European immigrants. For example, Russian architect Gregori Warchavchik immigrated to Sao Paulo in 1923<sup>282</sup> and found work with a Brazilian construction company. In 1925, Warchavchik published an article on the importance of modernist architecture and on the development of “machine-age” modernism. In it he stated that “a house is a machine, the technical perfection of which ensures, for instance, a rational distribution of light, heat, cold and hot water...”<sup>283</sup> Warchavchik also defended the shift in an architect’s role from a decorator to what he called an “engineer-builder.”

In 1927, following modernist precepts, Warchavchik built the first modernist construction in Latin America. Known as *Casa Modernista*, or “Modernist House,” it represented a clean, geometrical design that would later become the staple of modernists such as Oscar Niemeyer. However, because of the difficulties in finding sufficient new material and specialized workers, the Russian émigré built the house out of bricks, instead of concrete, and later covered it with cement to reproduce the visual effect of a structure constructed entirely of reinforced concrete. He also taught and trained Brazilian architects and was later appointed by Le Corbusier as the South American representative of CIAM. This connection with the international modernist movement further helped influence

---

<sup>281</sup>Fausto, Boris. *Getulio Vargas*. Companhia Das Letras, 2006.

<sup>282</sup>Ferraz, Geraldo. *Warchavchik e a introducao da nova arquitetura no Brasil: 1925 a 1940*. Sao Paulo, 1965.

<sup>283</sup>Guillen, Mauro F. *The Taylorized Beauty of the Mechanical: Scientific Management and the Rise of Modernist Architecture*. Princeton University Press, 2008, p.99.

Brazilian architecture and educate its professionals in both the modernist style and in Corbusian architecture.<sup>284</sup>

In 1930, when Getulio Vargas rose to power, he replaced the director of the prominent art school in Rio de Janeiro, the *Escola Nacional de Belas Artes*, or ENBA, with a young architect named Lucio Costa. This move reflected practical and political motivations, including the president's desire to generate social and cultural changes. Vargas aimed to transform Brazil politically by breaking with the traditional oligarchic system, and to signal the beginning of a new national era marked by industrial growth and modernization. In this sense, Costa represented a conscious choice in replacing the previous director, who was a conservative man with political ties to the oligarchies. Costa was still not entirely modernist in his professional approach, but he was enthusiastic about change.<sup>285</sup>

The son of a Brazilian military figure, Costa was born in France in 1902, but his father's military placement soon sent him back to Brazil, where he later studied architecture in Rio's "National School of the Arts," or ENBA, an institution modeled on the French education system, and the same institution that he would later direct.<sup>286</sup> Costa's appointment had a significant impact on the formation of Brazil's young architects, especially after he invited Russian émigré Gregori Warchavchik to join the school's faculty. It was Warchavchik, fundamentally a modernist, who helped disseminate new ideas and train young professionals in modernist architecture.

Costa's influence proved particularly productive as a mentor to his young ENBA protégé Oscar Niemeyer. Niemeyer was born on December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1907, into a privileged

---

<sup>284</sup>Ferraz, Geraldo. *Warchavchik e a introducao da nova arquitetura no Brasil: 1925 a 1940*. Sao Paulo, 1965.

<sup>285</sup>Fraser, Valerie. *Building the New World: Modern Architecture in Latin America*. Verso, 2001.

<sup>286</sup>Costa, Lucio. *Lucio Costa: Registro de Uma Vivencia*. Empresa das Artes, 1995.

*carioca* family. His family background and childhood experiences were constantly marked by the dichotomies of a highly divided society in which the stark contrasts between rich and poor, white and black, men and women were noticeable and present in everyday life. This division was also influenced by the opposing differences between the traditional and the new, a conflict that underlined political, social, and cultural developments and relationships in Brazil during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This dichotomy was also present in Niemeyer's conflicting beliefs in conservative Catholicism and the liberating experiences of his personal desires. The latter was often manifest in his quest for love and in his admiration of the female body and its sensuous pleasures, and he frequently remarked that his architecture reflected the natural curves of Brazilian women. As architectural historian David Underwood has noted, "Niemeyer's architecture is first and foremost a spirited celebration of the tropic and the erotic, of the magical landscapes and sensuous life-style of his native Rio."<sup>287</sup> Niemeyer's work reflected his personal understanding of the national traits that were unique to his country and culture, and his architectural modernism ultimately evolved in slightly different ways from its European origins. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that Le Corbusier and CIAM had a significant influence on Niemeyer's professional formation, as they had on that of other Brazilian architects.

During the 1930s, the Vargas regime wanted to step away from Brazil's conventional oligarchic heritage and to centralize the nation around the goal of modernized growth. The administration handed over state management to a new technocratic bureaucracy and to emphasize nationalist pride, promoted the extensive use of symbols and rituals. In this sense, the employment of modernist architecture served the purpose of symbolizing the

---

<sup>287</sup>Underwood, David. *Oscar Niemeyer and Brazilian Free-form Modernism*. George Braziller Inc, 1994, p.24.

advent of a new era, one that distanced itself from the old repressive, and politically fragmented, Republic of the Oligarchies.<sup>288</sup> To inaugurate this new period, Vargas launched a national competition in 1933 for the construction of a new building to house the Ministry of Health and Education, later known as the MES building. A team of young architects under the leadership of Lucio Costa won the bid, and signaled the beginning of the partnership between Costa and Niemeyer.

The Brazilian government wanted its new Ministry of Health and Education building, as an official structure, to reflect the country's ambitions for modern growth and political changes. To help them on their modernist project, Costa and Niemeyer invited Le Corbusier to work as a consultant, which he readily accepted.<sup>289</sup> Ironically, then, while searching for a new nationalist representation of Brazil's natural potential, the team of architects turned to a foreigner for technical and artistic consultation. However, it must be noted that the Swiss architect was so enamored with Latin American beauty, lines, and forms that the team did not see this as a case of foreign superiority influencing Brazilian inferior professionals. Instead, the relationship was explained as a partnership of mutual collaboration and respect between both groups, an interpretation that satisfied Brazil's growing national pride.<sup>290</sup> Ultimately, the collaboration greatly shaped the future development of Brazilian modernist architecture, and the MES edifice became the first modernist government building in Brazil. It employed key elements of Corbusian design,

---

<sup>288</sup>Underwood, David. *Oscar Niemeyer and Brazilian Free-form Modernism*. George Braziller Inc, 1994.

<sup>289</sup>Guillen, Mauro F. *The Taylorized Beauty of the Mechanical: Scientific Management and the Rise of Modernist Architecture*. Princeton University Press, 2008.

<sup>290</sup>Underwood, David. *Oscar Niemeyer and Brazilian Free-form Modernism*. George Braziller Inc, 1994.

such as *brise soleils* and *pilotis*;<sup>291</sup> both would also become hallmarks of Niemeyer's later buildings, including those in Brasilia.

In 1936, certainly also influenced by Le Corbusier and Warchavchik, Costa published an article called "Arguments for a new architecture" which extolled the benefits of the new architectural style and the country's dire need for change. Three years later, Costa again partnered with his friend and protégé, Oscar Niemeyer, to build the Brazil pavilion at the New York World's Fair. The pavilion was, according to author Valerie Fraser, an important propaganda tool for Brazil's modernists. It offered them significant international exposition and respectability. The Fair's theme was centered on developments of the future, and on the promise of a modern world, and Costa and Niemeyer were asked to construct an exhibit that reflected Brazil's modernity, its potential growth, and cultural uniqueness. While the building used modern aesthetics, lines, and materials, it reflected the country's unique tropicalism by including a central garden displaying national plants, and even Amazon snakes. Hence Brazil, as interpreted in the building's design, was a mixture of natural and exotic wildlife with urban and industrial modernization. Ultimately this was the message that the Vargas regime, and the architects, wanted to express.<sup>292</sup>

The following year Niemeyer, doubtlessly benefitting from the Fair's positive exposure, received a commission from Juscelino Kubitschek, then mayor of Belo Horizonte, capital of the state of Minas Gerais, to build a new development complex on the city's outskirts. The project was named *Pampulha*, and its ultimate goal was to develop the

---

<sup>291</sup>*Brise soleil* are flaps, or levers, that are supposed to shade the building from the strong tropical sun. Normally created as a stationary and fixed structure, in Niemeyer's later production they become movable and can be adjusted according to the sun's inclination. *Pilotis* are also another strong staple of both Corbusian and Niemeyer's architectures, and their primary function is to raise the structure above ground while opening the ground view to the horizon.

<sup>292</sup>Fraser, Valerie. *Building the New World: Modern Architecture in Latin America*. Verso, 2001.

region's economy by creating interesting and modern compounds to attract the city's upper class. Plans called for the complex to house a casino, a dance hall, church, and a private Yacht club, in order to attract rich buyers interested in purchasing plots in the area. Construction of Niemeyer's design, completed in 1944, seemed to confirm the idea that Brazilian architecture could serve as social transformer, matching the ideals of its European counterpart, as professed by Le Corbusier and CIAM. *Pampulha* also offered Niemeyer the opportunity to freely develop his particular modernist style, which author David Underwood calls "free-form modernism."<sup>293</sup>

While Brazilian elites during the interwar period displayed a clear enthusiasm for new European tendencies, the dialogue ran in two directions; Brazilian architecture also came to influence architects overseas. Most notably, Le Corbusier was greatly affected by the natural environment of Latin America, specifically by its vast horizons and the natural curvature of its rivers and valleys. His trips to Latin America during the 1920s and 1930s helped inspire Le Corbusier to shift towards a more curvilinear architecture, which incorporated subtle and elegant curves into many of his designs.

That trend in turn also validated the curve as a useful, beautiful, and naturally harmonious form in the eyes of Brazilian architects. Therefore, as Oscar Niemeyer developed his particular style based on Corbusian precepts, he also increasingly incorporated curvilinear forms, in contrast to the rigidity of original European modernist design. This clearly indicates, as Valerie Fraser pointed out, that "Latin American architects demonstrated that they understood the rules of European modernism, but did not need to be confined by them; that it was possible to be both modern and regionally or nationally

---

<sup>293</sup>Underwood, David. *Oscar Niemeyer and Brazilian Free-form Modernism*. George Braziller Inc, 1994.

specific at the same time.”<sup>294</sup> Ultimately, Niemeyer accomplished the true goal of the *Anthropofagia* movement, cultural cannibalism, by assimilating the European elements of CIAM architecture and further molding them to satisfy the unique traits and tendencies of Brazilian nature and culture. In other words, as Fraser points out, it was in Latin America that modernist architecture developed into an incorporation of the natural, and tropical, curve.<sup>295</sup> The architecture of Oscar Niemeyer became the utmost modernist manifestation of ways in which the poetic element of straight lines and continuing curves could coexist with the functionalism of CIAM style, thus producing an architecture that was as pragmatic as it was surreal. In this lay the beauty, and contradictions, of Brasilia.

### **Brasilia, the Modernist City**

In 1956, Kubitschek signed the national decree that created the agency responsible for the construction project: Novacap. The government’s next step was to officially launch the national competition that would select the architectural project and design that would be used in the city’s creation. Technical engineering organizations and professional institutions were concerned that the government might accept submissions from foreign architects, which would contradict Kubitschek’s nationalist discourse and campaign. To their relief, entry to the competition was limited to Brazilians. Proposals had to include submission of a basic urban layout and a subsequent report to support the proposed design; any other documentation was optional. That approach kept the central focus on proposing an “idea,” a broad architectural concept of both form and character of the future capital. The competition

---

<sup>294</sup>Fraser, Valerie. *Building the New World: Modern Architecture in Latin America*. Verso, 2001, p.14.

<sup>295</sup>Fraser, Valerie. “Cannibalizing Le Corbusier: the MES Gardens of Roberto Burle Marx” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, vol. 59, no. 2 (Jun. 2000):180-193. P.



drew twenty-six entries, including Lucio Costa's project. According to Holston,<sup>296</sup> Costa kept his Master Plan deliberately broad and unspecific to hide his personal and political beliefs in the socially transformative powers of modernist architecture, since the utopian idealism underlining his urban plan could be dangerously confused with leftist political inclinations.

Costa's generalized concept of a new and modernist capital won first prize and triggered a vicious controversy. Critics of Costa's plan argued that a jury of serious professionals could not take seriously such a generic and undetailed proposition. They accused the jury of favoritism, suggesting that Niemeyer, who had been appointed chief architect to head the construction project, had used his political clout to sway the odds in his friend's favor. Regardless of rumors, the final selection of Costa's design enabled both men to work together once again, in a positive working partnership that proved to be both practical and beneficial when it came to building an entire city in only four years.

The very lack of detail in Costa's proposition was actually part of what drew supporters; the jury approved of his poetic description and idealized narrative, which served the government's purpose of surrounding the transfer of the capital in a veil of mythical inspiration and calling. In the broadness of his proposal, Costa diverged from the modernist norm that would present projects in terms of practical functionalism and desired social transformation. British architect William Holford, who served on the judging committee, stated that Costa's design was "the best idea for a unified capital city...it is a master piece of creative conceptions...it demonstrates an urban discipline and orderly disposition..."<sup>297</sup>

---

<sup>296</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. 1st ed. University Of Chicago Press, 1989.

<sup>297</sup>Tamanini, L. *Brasília : memória da construção*. 2nd ed. Brasília DF: Projecto Editorial, 2003, p.151.

According to Holston, the chosen submission shrouded its architect's true inclinations behind the rhetoric of divine inspiration and unassuming simplicity. In introducing his project, Costa wrote:

It was not my intention to enter the competition – nor indeed, am I really so doing. I am merely liberating my mind from a possible solution which sprang to it as a complete picture, but one which I had not sought. I therefore come forward, not as a properly equipped expert...but as a mere *maquisard* of town planning who does not even mean to continue working out the idea offered in this report, save perhaps as a consultant.<sup>298</sup>

Through this tactic that Holston called “self-effacement,” Costa deliberately waived his rights to the plan's creation, and in so doing distanced himself from any negative implications it might have. He described himself as “merely” a “*maquisard*,” a guerrilla fighter of town planning,” adopting a term referring to the French underground resistance during World War II.<sup>299</sup> Once again, by using this subtle imagery, Costa built his proposal through heroic symbolism and the claims of unpretentious inspiration, letting him disguise his political and social beliefs behind the broadness of his supposedly spontaneously-inspired design. In claiming that he had no real intentions of entering the competition were it not for the pressing need of unburdening his mind of the unexpected artistic inspiration that he received from an almost mystical experience, Costa also subtly referred back to the foundation myth of Dom Bosco's prophetic vision. Furthermore, Costa dehistoricized his

---

<sup>298</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. 1st ed. University Of Chicago Press, 1989, pp.64-65.

<sup>299</sup>The *maquis* were underground guerilla fighters that resisted German occupation of France during World War II. For more information see: Jackson, Julian. *France: The Dark Years, 1940-1944*. Oxford University Press, 2003.

proposal, avoiding any reference to the old social and urban ailments that had long affected Brazilian urban centers. According to Holston, this dehistoricization is at the core of most foundation myths and, as such, appeals to elements of naturality, inevitability, and universality.<sup>300</sup> Costa's claims of having been naturally, or spontaneously, inspired served as a strategy to justify and legitimize the plan's validity.

Costa's main design for the future city's layout centered around the form of two crossing lines, meant to represent a universal symbol of rationalism, with each of the four points pointing to a cardinal direction. Referring to meanings such as "x marks the spot," Costa connected his vision of a cross to ideals of possession and faith, painting this chosen form as universally acceptable, recognizable, and powerful. In Costa's words, his vision was "born of that initial gesture which anyone would make when pointing to a given place, or taking possession of it: the drawing of two axes crossing each other at right angles, in the sign of the cross."<sup>301</sup> The cross functioned as both an index and an icon, an effective tool of communicating the ideals behind the plan. Normally a cross indicates a spatially defined place that carried attributes of property, and civilization. As an icon, it also attempts to recreate meanings such as the sanctity of a location marked by Christianity's major symbol: the cross. As Holston noted, this symbolic association evoked the "idea of a sacred site for the city of Brasilia and a divine benediction for the founding of the capital."<sup>302</sup> Hence the physical structure of Brasilia, from its very beginning, was shrouded in an aura of nationalist drive and utopian mythology.

---

<sup>300</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. 1st ed. University Of Chicago Press, 1989.

<sup>301</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. 1st ed. University Of Chicago Press, 1989, p.70.

<sup>302</sup>Ibid, p.70.

Costa's choice of a cross also reflected the classic Greek and Roman tendencies of mapping locations around a cross-like grid. Essentially, what Costa tried to accomplish with his vague design was to appeal to religious symbolism and ancient foundation myths. By doing that, he provided an emotional justification for his project as an inspired idea of a new city, which signaled the advent of a new era and the beginning of a novel, and great, Brazilian civilization. In his Master Plan, Costa also attempted to distance his original designs from the undeniable influence of European modernism and CIAM. By the 1950s, it was well-known that the modernist movement in architecture, as proposed by Le Corbusier, had strong and direct ties to social transformations. Hence it was better, at least during that initial stage, for Costa to draw on the mythology of classic urban foundation, rather than stressing the practical and political implications of architectural modernism that could be misinterpreted as part of greater political, and possibly leftist, idealism. In other words, while "avoiding the details of sociopolitical reorganization, [the proposal] effectively disguised the revolutionary objectives of the plan and its planners in proposing a specifically modernist capital for Brazil."<sup>303</sup>

While Costa's initial proposal masked his Corbusian influences in its broad language and classical symbolism, it remains clear that Brasilia's design was inspired by CIAM philosophies of modern architecture. That European influence is evident when comparing Costa's Master Plan for the city to the precepts on urban planning that Le Corbusier had laid-out before World War II. The Swiss architect sought simplicity in his grand designs and was committed to the value of standardization and functional separation for promoting good

---

<sup>303</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. 1st ed. University Of Chicago Press, 1989, p.75.

urban order. Back in 1929, following CIAM's second meeting, Le Corbusier stated that "poverty, the inadequacy of traditional techniques have brought in their wake a confusion of powers, an artificial mingling of functions...we must find and apply new methods, lending themselves naturally to standardization, industrialization...if we persist in the present methods by which the two functions (circulation and structure) are mingled, then we will remain petrified in the same immobility."<sup>304</sup> He believed that urban problems could only be resolved through simplification and functional segregation, and so he argued that the ideal Corbusian city should be divided into functional zones such as work, residential areas, entertainment centers, and government buildings.

Costa's design ultimately embraced that broad definition of city planning, following Corbusian zoning principles by setting aside specific areas around the central cross-like axis to house segregated functions. According to the plan, the country's main government buildings would rest at the center of the cross, placing the heart of Brazilian government at the center of what he called his "Monumental Axis."<sup>305</sup> Brasilia was designed as a functional city, with its existence firmly planted on the precepts of state functionalism and government administration. Surrounding that and spreading out in an organized fashion, Costa planned different functional zones that would constitute the new, modernist city, including special areas for the concentration of international embassies, and zones to house health centers and hospitals. Along the horizontal lines of the cross, known as the East Wing and West Wing, he proposed building residential areas. The design was based on the structure of orderly

---

<sup>304</sup>Scott, James C. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. Yale University Press, 1999, p.109.

<sup>305</sup>Ribeiro, Gustavo Lins. *A Capital da Esperanca. Brasilia: Estudo sobre uma Grande Obra da Construção Civil*. M.A. thesis, Graduate Program in Anthropology, Univeristy of Brasilia (UnB), 1980.

apartment blocks, or *superquadras*, which became pivotal elements of Costa's and Niemeyer's modernist project.



**Figure 3.** Brasilia's Monumental Axis with future governmental buildings. Photo by Mario Fontenelle. Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal.

Plans for the new capital's *superquadras* reflected Costa's ultimate goal of efficient urban organization, which concentrated the population in specific residential sectors. He envisioned that each block would be self-sufficient in services such as banks, bakeries, and supermarkets. With secondary streets connecting each block to the bigger highways, residents should ideally enjoy a quick commute from home to work. However, there was a more subtle goal underlining the project. Each compound was supposed to house members of all social classes, mostly employees of the federal government's overcrowded public functionalism system. In this sense, urban planning would necessarily force a stronger social amalgamation without the harsh segregation of social discrimination based on housing status and standards.<sup>306</sup> This "hidden agenda" behind Costa's and Niemeyer's designs reflected

<sup>306</sup>El-Dahdah, Fares. *CASE: Lucio Costa Brasilia's Superquadras*. Harvard Design School, Prestel, 2005.

CIAM's belief that through architecture, humanity and society could be reinvented and molded into an improved form.<sup>307</sup>

Another way in which Costa's plans for Brasilia applied that ideal of architectural design driving social transformation was his decision to eliminate the experience of walking on public streets. Conforming to Corbusian design, Brazil's new capital was set up to, functionally and efficiently revolve around the automobile, since Le Corbusier and other modernists, denounced public squares and streets as the locus for social unrest and moral depravity, and since unplanned roads led to the intense, chaotic, and often violent coexistence of pedestrians, automobiles and other modes of transportation. What this modernist proposal offered was a structured grid that allowed fast-paced transportation without the negative consequence of traffic jams, and the constant need for drivers to dodge pedestrians as both claimed rights to the street. In this sense, CIAM conferences proposed to address such urban ills through proposals that consolidated what became known as the "death of the street"<sup>308</sup> as a means of social control.

Throughout its history, Rio de Janeiro had repeatedly witnessed the forces of social mobilization taking over public squares, and its street corners seemed to promote easier access to prostitution, drug deals, and other moral vices.<sup>309</sup> With a design that followed the modernist goal of preventing such patterns, Brasilia became known as a city without street corners and pedestrians. Costa designed it as a city for fast-paced transportation, without the

---

<sup>307</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. 1st ed. University Of Chicago Press, 1989.

<sup>308</sup>Scott, James C. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. Yale University Press, 1999.

<sup>309</sup>Evenson, Norma. *Two Brazilian Capitals: Architecture and Urbanism in Rio de Janeiro and Brasilia*. Yale University Press, New Haven, 1973.

incorporation of sidewalks, and where eliminating the possibility of gatherings in street corners aimed to ease the threat of social unrest and rebellious mobilization. The city, as a modernist and functional urban space, was supposed to house a population that could either afford their own automobile, or that would get around in government cars or transportation. As for the need to walk to grocery stores or other service centers, since each *superquadra* was designed to be almost self-sufficient, those services were within walking distance, and the only “sidewalks” planned for the city were really pathways connecting apartment buildings to each *superquadra*’s commercial area.<sup>310</sup>

In practice, such decisions ultimately meant that living in Brasilia presented the general public with a rather surreal experience; residents of the modernist city had to navigate a foreign urban space. While a cityscape organized around numbers and a grid-like pattern seemed logical to architects, immigrants from Rio de Janeiro and from cities from Brazil's Northeast and Southeastern regions were not accustomed to such a style. Their older cities were developed naturally, without that imposed structure. The lack of a pedestrian culture in Brasilia, together with the sharp angles and soft curves of the city's architecture, give the newcomer the impression of being an outsider in a foreign land. This characteristic of modernist cities suited Brasilia's purpose and symbolism. By deliberately neglecting social, cultural, and psychological ties with other localities and by ignoring the traditional format of Brazilian cityscapes, modernist planners aimed to mold a population of migrants with diverse regional, cultural, and political backgrounds into a new organism that eventually identified itself with its new locality. They ultimately accomplished this outcome,

---

<sup>310</sup>El-Dahdah, Fares. *CASE: Lucio Costa Brasilia's Superquadras*. Harvard Design School, Prestel, 2005.



but only through the presence of shock techniques, mainly that of sharply separating the city's inhabitants from their previous social ties and connections to other cities and cultures.<sup>311</sup>

In order to complete the process of social control through architectural planning, modernist architecture proposed a system of decontextualization supported by these techniques of shock. This is also another link between Corbusian urban planning and Brasilia's design: conscientious dehistoricization. As Holston has noted, few of Le Corbusier's plans "make any reference to the urban history, traditions, or aesthetic tastes of the place in which it is located. However striking...in their neutrality they could be anywhere at all."<sup>312</sup> The same can be said of Brasilia. True, Costa's "Monumental Axis" represented an attempt to refer to Brazilian history, foundation mythology, or even religious and heroic symbolism. But as Scott has written, Brasilia remained a city that "could have been anywhere, that provided no clue to its own history, unless that history was the modernist doctrine of CIAM. It was a state-imposed city invented to project a new Brazil to Brazilians and to the world at large."<sup>313</sup> Streets were not named after people or places, but instead, labeled by alphabetic and numeric components.

Finally, Brasilia's designers also reflected CIAM's influence in defining a modernist city by the presence of state interference. According to Le Corbusier, political leaders could only create an adequate and efficient urban plan through the involvement of a present and

---

<sup>311</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. 1st ed. University Of Chicago Press, 1989.

<sup>312</sup>Ibid, p.104.

<sup>313</sup>Scott, James C. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. Yale University Press, 1999, p.120.

participating state. He regarded a strong bureaucratic government as necessary for the completion of such an endeavor, an assumption that proved true with Brasilia. The project of building a new capital and transferring the seat of Brazilian government from Rio de Janeiro to the middle of the country's Central Plateau undoubtedly benefitted from Brazil's traditionally state-driven politics. The country had a long tradition of state-centered and guided developmental projects, a fact that clearly aided Kubitschek's success in finally implementing his projects.<sup>314</sup> Certainly in a less centralized government, a similar project might have been hindered by private interests and institutional interference. This link between modernist city planning and the perceived value of centralized action also explains why architects and other observers in Latin America, India, and Russia tended to embrace Corbusian architecture with greater enthusiasm than those from the United States.

Ultimately, as Holston appropriately described, CIAM's modernism connected “architectural innovation, perceptual change, and social transformation in a utopian mode”<sup>315</sup> under the auspices of a highly present state bureaucracy. Once the architectural jury of 1956 selected Costa's design as the winner, the Brazilian government quickly began construction on the future capital. To ensure its fast development, Novacap, as a state planning agency, took control of all the land at the construction site, and officials rapidly mobilized the building effort by attracting masses of workers that were, ironically, denied rights to remain in the modernist, planned city once construction was completed. According to Brasilia's modernist designs, the capital was a functional city, a place for government officials and

---

<sup>314</sup>Skidmore, Thomas. *Politics in Brazil 1930-1964: An Experiment in Democracy*. Updated. Oxford University Press, USA, 2007.

<sup>315</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. 1st ed. University Of Chicago Press, 1989, p.56.

bureaucrats to live and work. Following Costa's and Niemeyer's idealism, within the city's residential core society would follow an egalitarian structure, in which directors, government ministers and building janitors, for instance, would all reside in the same apartment complexes. As idealistic as this plan sounded, it failed to incorporate a lower class of Brazilians, the construction workers, that while needed for the city's physical construction phase, was dismissible once Brasilia effectively became the country's new capital. This realization sheds light on the contradiction between modernist architecture's utopian blueprint and actual application, while illustrating the practicality of its design and focus on urban zoning and efficiency.

## CHAPTER 5. INEQUALITIES IN BRAZIL: RACE AND IMMIGRATION

Howard Winant, American sociologist and racial theorist, began his 1994 book *Racial Conditions: Politics, Theory, Comparisons* with the following statement:

Race shows no sign of declining significance. Quite the contrary: in a range of manifestations wider and wilder than the most fertile imaginations could have dreamed up, race continues to operate as a fundamental factor in political and cultural life all around the world.<sup>316</sup>

---

<sup>316</sup> Winant, Howard. *Racial Conditions: Politics, Theory, Comparisons*. University of Minnesota Press, 1994 p. 1.

Winant went on to say that as a fundamental tool of hegemony, race is embedded with power, order, and indeed the “meaning systems of every society in which it operates.”<sup>317</sup> For a comprehensive understanding of inequalities during the construction of Brasilia, a general overview of the theoretical framework behind racial considerations is beneficial. Furthermore, the history of Brasilia’s creation has a unique element of class and race inequality that directly relates to the masses of Northeastern workers that migrated to the city. Therefore, a discussion of racism during the capital’s formative years requires considerations of the history of regional prejudice in Brazil, which this chapter will also explain.

The modern concept of race emerged, according to Winant, from the creation of a truly globalized economy through the seaborne explorations and colonizations of the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>318</sup> Adding to the economic integration of the world after the so-called “Age of Exploration”, the rise of the Atlantic Slave Trade further consolidated the European need for formal racial categorizations that could justify slavery through rational conceptions. Looking at the negative effects of economic and urban growth, involving issues such as criminality and poverty, European intellectuals attempted to explain the ailments that affected urban centers through racial and social categorizations. In other words, the scientific classification of human beings according to racial, and biological, characteristics was a European invention.<sup>319</sup>

---

<sup>317</sup>Ibid, p.2.

<sup>318</sup> Winant, Howard. “Race and Race Theory”. *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 26 (2000), pp. 169-185.

<sup>319</sup>Graves Jr., Joseph L. *The Emperor’s New Clothes Biological Theories of Race at the Millennium*. Rutgers University Press, 2002. Magubane, Zine. *Bringing the Empire Home: Race, Class, and Gender in Britain and Colonial South Africa*. University of Chicago Press, 2003.

To start by defining the term of “race,” Winant calls it a “concept that signifies and symbolizes sociopolitical conflicts and interests in reference to different types of human bodies”.<sup>320</sup> Despite attempts at justifying racial categories through scientific terminology and use of defined phenotypes, the selections of the specific traits that constitute a racial category is necessarily a social and historical process. In this sense, racial considerations and studies in Brazil can be broken down into three different schools of thoughts, all by-products of existing social, cultural, and political constraints.

### **Race as a Theoretical Framework**

According to Brazilian sociologist Carlos Hasenbalg,<sup>321</sup> the first modern school of theorists to study race in Brazil originated with Gilberto Freyre, an internationally acclaimed Brazilian anthropologist. In the 1930s, Freyre published the book *Casa Grande e Senzala*, or “The Masters and the Slaves,”<sup>322</sup> in which he analyzed the formation of the country’s society through its strong reliance on slave trade and its paternalistic traditions. In his work, Freyre rejected allegations of racial discrimination in Brazil and defended, instead, the theory that it was a racial democracy. Comparing Brazil to the United States, he concluded that since Brazil lacked anything like the recurrent violent racial manifestations and formal segregation laws of U.S. history, then that reflected a tolerant society.<sup>323</sup>

The second school of racial analysis in Brazil displayed increased concern with understanding how racial relations merged with class identities, especially in the Brazilian

<sup>320</sup>Winant, Howard. “Race and Race Theory”. *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 26 (2000), p. 172.

<sup>321</sup>Hasenbalg, Carlos. “Notes on Racial and Political Inequality in Brazil.” In *Racial Politics in Contemporary Brazil*. Duke University Press, 1999.

<sup>322</sup>Freyre, Gilberto. *The Masters and the Slaves: a Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization*. University of California Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1987.

<sup>323</sup>Fontaine, Pierre-Michel ed. *Race, Class, and Power in Brazil*. Center for Afro-american Studies, University of California, 1985.

Northeast. In this sense, supporters of this new perspective argued that class categorizations outweighed racial constitution when it came to determining an individual's position in society. That approach again removed the focus from any question of racist inclinations in Brazilian life and placed the emphasis, instead, on class prejudice.<sup>324</sup> Finally, the third group of thought emerged during the 1950s, and concentrated on the regions of Brazil's Center-South and South. One of the main proponents of this school of thought was Brazilian anthropologist Florestan Fernandes, who argued that racial prejudice contradicted the capitalist structure of post-abolition Brazil. Therefore, any discriminatory preconceptions were merely residual tendencies from years of a strong slavery tradition, before abolition in 1888.<sup>325</sup>

Revisiting this question in more recent years, Carlos Hasenbalg argued, instead, that racial discrimination in twentieth-century Brazil existed and that it represented a new phenomenon separate from the country's pre-abolition structure. Hence, he argued, racism evolved with the evolution of Brazil's political system and social structure, and cannot be explained as merely a consequence of the slavery system. Furthermore, Hasenbalg also contended that racially discriminatory practices in Brazil were products of a competitive system that pitches whites and blacks against each other. In other words, "the racist practices of the racially dominant group...are functionally related to the material and symbolic benefits obtained by whites through the disqualification of nonwhites as competitors."<sup>326</sup>

Hasenbalg focused mainly on the conceptualization of race as a form of social subjugation.

---

<sup>324</sup>Ibid.

<sup>325</sup>Twine, France Winddance. *Racism in a Racial Democracy; the Maintenance of White Supremacy in Brazil*. Rutgers University Press, 2000.

<sup>326</sup>Hasenbalg, Carlos. "Race and socioeconomic inequalities in Brazil: historical perspectives". In *Race, Class, and Power in Brazil*. Edited by Pierre-Michel Fontaine, Center for Afro-American Studies, University of California, 1985, p. 27.

He concluded that race, instead of class alone, functioned as a determinant of an individual's position in the social hierarchy and thus, that racial ideas in Brazil maintained elitist and white supremacy.

Despite disagreements regarding the extent of prejudice in Brazil, contemporary analysts generally agree that two factors stand out as the main determinants of Brazilian social categorization: the discriminatory practices of the dominant “whiter” and richer group, and the uneven geographic distribution of whites and blacks. In this sense, a greater contingent of non-whites<sup>327</sup> lived, and lives, in the underdeveloped Northeastern region. By comparison, a larger number of whites inhabited Brazil's southeast, the country's most economically developed region.<sup>328</sup> To back up this conclusion, Hasenbalg cited a national report on regional population concentration from 1940 to 1976, its data represented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Percentage of non-white population residing in Brazil's two major regions

	<b>1950</b>	<b>1960</b>	<b>1976</b>
<b>NORTHEAST</b>	53.7%	52.6%	47.2%
<b>SOUTHEAST</b>	18%	19%	31%

In 1950, 53.7% of the country's non-white population resided in the Northeast, as opposed to 18% living in the Southeast. In 1960, the same report showed a slight decrease in the Afro-Brazilian population of the Northeast to 52.6%, while the non-white population

<sup>327</sup>Many current racial theorists, Brazilian and foreign, prefer the terminology of “non-whites” over simply the word “black” when discussing race in Brazil since the first allows for the inclusion of other racial categories such as “browns”, or *pardos*, *mulatos*, *morenos* etc. that are often found in Brazilian census reports.

<sup>328</sup>Hasenbalg, Carlos. “Race and socioeconomic inequalities in Brazil: historical perspectives”. In *Race, Class, and Power in Brazil*. Edited by Pierre-Michel Fontaine, Center for Afro-American Studies, University of California, 1985, p. 29.

of the Southeastern region increased to 19%. This small rise was due to inter-regional migration, a process that significantly increased in the 1970s. In 1976, the same census reported that 47.2% of Brazil's non-whites remained in the Northeast, while the number rose in the Southeast to 31%.<sup>329</sup>

Many factors contributed to this numerical shift between the 1950s and 1970s. Brazil's government organized an industrial working class, especially in the Southeast, to increase national production during the late 1950s and 1960. That was followed by the growing industrialization process of the 1970s, attracting workers from distant regions to the industrialized centers.<sup>330</sup> Finally, changes in the racial categories of the 1976 census forced some individuals to choose an identity within the so-called Brazilian racial continuum.<sup>331</sup> That factor illustrates the complexity of racial identification in Brazil, since the Brazilian color spectrum is extensive, but it ultimately reflects the general racial identification of the Northeastern population as remaining more made up of either blacks, or racially mixed.

### **Racial Democracy and Whitening**

The issue of race in Brazil transcends the scope of mere "black" and "white" categorizations, dating back before the abolition of slavery in Brazil in 1888. Nineteenth-century abolitionists and social reformers claimed that the country benefitted from a racial

---

<sup>329</sup>Census data cited in Hasenbalg, Carlos. "Race and socioeconomic inequalities in Brazil: historical perspectives". In *Race, Class, and Power in Brazil*. Edited by Pierre-Michel Fontaine, Center for Afro-American Studies, University of California, 1985, p. 29.

<sup>330</sup>Weinstein, Barbara. *For Social Peace in Brazil: Industrialists and the Remaking of the Working Class in São Paulo, 1922-1964*. The University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

<sup>331</sup>This term refers to Brazil's flexible racial categorization, which includes different shades of "darkness" within its racial spectrum. Skidmore, Thomas E. *Black into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought*. Duke University Press, 1993.



miscegenation that ultimately generated a true racial democracy. In the 1880s, Joaquim Nabuco, a talented politician and abolitionist from the state of Pernambuco, wrote:

Slavery, to our good fortune, never embittered the slave's spirit toward the master, at least collectively, nor did it create between the races that mutual hate which naturally exists between oppressors and oppressed.<sup>332</sup>

Abolitionists such as Nabuco argued that the end of slavery in Brazil was long overdue, especially after pressure from England intensified in the 1850s, when its greater control over slave ships headed to Brazilian ports reduced the number of incoming slaves.<sup>333</sup> Moreover, abolitionists argued that Brazil could only continue on its journey towards growth and development after the final emancipation of its enslaved population. They believed that Brazil's post-slavery expansion would come from having more white European people move to Brazil to solve the country's labor shortage. Ironically, the same men who defended the notion of a racially harmonious and tolerant society also argued for new immigration laws that would attract European workers and, as they hoped, create a gradual whitening of the Brazilian people.<sup>334</sup>

Accordingly, motivated by the need to solve the labor shortage that strongly hampered Brazil's economic growth after the drastic reduction of the slave trade in the mid-1800s the government passed several immigration laws that facilitated the migration of Europeans to Brazil. Propaganda publications touted the great opportunities awaiting European agricultural workers, and Brazil paid the fares of immigrants and their families

---

<sup>332</sup>Cited in Skidmore, Thomas E. *Black into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought*. Duke University Press, 1993.p. 23.

<sup>333</sup>Costa, Emilia Viotti da. *The Brazilian Empire Myths and Histories*. The University of Chicago Press, 1985.

<sup>334</sup>Fausto, Boris. *História do Brasil*. Editora da Universidade de Sao Paulo, 1994.

travelling to Brazil. Those steps rapidly increased the contingent of white Europeans in the country. In São Paulo alone, from 1890 to 1901, an estimated 800,000 Europeans (mainly Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese workers) arrived in the city.<sup>335</sup>

The increase in European immigration to Brazil resonated with the developmental arguments of reformers such as Joaquim Nabuco. In 1883, Nabuco stated that abolitionists shared the goal of creating a country where “European immigration attracted by the generosity of our institutions...may constantly bring to the tropics a flow of lively, energetic, and healthy Caucasian blood, which we may absorb without danger...”<sup>336</sup> This statement reflects the prejudice hidden behind arguments of racial miscegenation and the belief that Brazil could accelerate its national development through the gradual whitening of the population. As historian Thomas Skidmore has noted, such ideas served as the foundation of a Brazilian culture built on the complex relationship between different social classes and racial groups. Ultimately, the belief that Brazil’s racial amalgamation generated a true racial democracy functioned as a system of denial that masked the true prejudice behind the Brazilian elite’s whitening efforts.<sup>337</sup>

Entering the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Brazilians believed their country still carried a strong influence from its history of slavery, the vast numbers of slaves, especially from West Africa, brought into the country during its Colonial and Imperial years. African-inspired cosmological systems such as *Candomblé*, *Umbanda*,<sup>338</sup> and even musical styles such as *Axe*

<sup>335</sup>Costa, Emilia Viotti da. *The Brazilian Empire Myths and Histories*. The University of Chicago Press, 1985. p. 191.

<sup>336</sup>Cited in Skidmore, Thomas E. *Black into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought*. Duke University Press, 1993.p. 24.

<sup>337</sup>Skidmore, Thomas E. *Black into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought*. Duke University Press, 1993.

<sup>338</sup>Religious manifestations with strong original ties to African customs and beliefs. In Brazil it is proudly celebrated, in states such as Bahia, where there was a significant entrance of African slaves, as African

remain popular today, as evidence of the amalgamation of African and Luso culture in Brazilian society. Advocates pointed to such patterns as proof of Brazil's racial democracy, with the coexistence of different cultures and the emergence of a national construct from the assimilation of seemingly disparaging tendencies. However, this interpretation, which Freyre famously defended in the 1930s, masks the hidden system of racial discrimination under the guise of national identity.<sup>339</sup>

Brazilian intellectuals Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Octavio Ianni, from the University of São Paulo, also questioned the theory of Brazilian racial democracy. At the request of UNESCO (the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) in the 1950s, those two scholars undertook a systematic evaluation of the country's alleged racial egalitarianism.<sup>340</sup> The results, unveiled in the 1960s, exposed ongoing discriminatory practices in social processes and cultural considerations. However, the advent of the military dictatorship that ruled Brazil from 1964 to 1985 repressed critical questioning of the nation's political, economic, and social structures. Hundreds of Brazilian political activists and intellectuals, including Cardoso and Ianni, were forcibly deported.<sup>341</sup> The military government continued to propagate the myth of Brazil's racial democracy, and leaders celebrated the country's racial mixing as a strategy to avoid contentious sociopolitical discord. It was only with the gradual softening of the dictatorship's censorship in the late

---

heritage. For more information see Harding, Rachel E. *A Refuge in Thunder: Candomblé and Alternative Spaces of Blackness*. Indiana University Press, 2003.

<sup>339</sup>Hanchard, Michael. *Racial Politics in Contemporary Brazil*. Duke University Press, 1999.

<sup>340</sup>Twine, France Winddance. *Racism in a Racial Democracy; the Maintenance of White Supremacy in Brazil*. Rutgers University Press, 2000.

<sup>341</sup>For more on Brazil's military dictatorship see: Alves, Maria Helena Moreira. *Estado e Oposicao no Brasil 1964-1984*. EDUSC, 2005. Fico, Carlos. *Alem do Golpe. Versoes e controversias sobre 1964 e a Ditadura Militar*. Editora Record, 2004. Skidmore, Thomas E. *The Politics of Military Rule in Brazil 1964-85*. Oxford University Press, 1988.

1970s and early 1980s, and with its final collapse in 1985 that racial dynamics returned as a topic of formal scholarly debate.<sup>342</sup>

Comparing Brazil and the United States, authors such as Howard Winant argue that while in the US segregationists sought to solidify the color divide between whites and blacks, Brazilians preferred to think in terms of gradations of color, since racial classifications occurred along the lines of a “racial continuum”. Moreover, the Brazilian government traditionally resisted the suppression of racial boundaries, preferring, instead, to emphasize the myth of the racial democracy, further depoliticizing the issue. Winant explained that Brazil historically displayed:

An assumption, mainly by white elites, that racism does not exist in Brazil; the reproduction and dissemination of stereotypes denigrating blacks and valorizing whites, which results in low, distorted self-images; and coercive sanctions and the pre-emption of dissent imposed by whites upon blacks who question the asymmetrical patterns of racial interaction.<sup>343</sup>

Despite authoritarian efforts to limit intellectual debate of specific topics such as racism, the military government of the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s conducted several censuses, allegedly to better reflect the country’s reality and facilitate national control. Census reports and studies are sometimes efficient tools of state bureaucratization and centralization, but can hide underlying discriminative tendencies. The dictatorship’s census reports indicated that the population of whites and mulattos grew significantly from 1950 to

---

<sup>342</sup>Hanchard, Michael. *Racial Politics in Contemporary Brazil*. Duke University Press, 1999.

<sup>343</sup>Winant, Howard. “Racial Democracy and Racial Identity. In *Racial Politics in Contemporary Brazil*. Edited by Michael Hanchard, Duke University Press, 1999, p.101.

1980 in Brazil. However, that claim did not indicate a real decrease in the black population. Instead, the assertion shows that the belief in the gradual whitening of Brazilian society, and in its racial democratization, was strongly ingrained in people's subconscious. In this sense, a shift in racial identification led responders to a self-classification of either white or mulatto, reflecting a cultural attraction towards the idea of "being white".<sup>344</sup>

Finally, a main challenge to the analysis of Brazilian racial structure remains: the significant variability of racial self-identification, which hinders the process of classification, and keeps the general population from directly confronting the nation's racial prejudices and practices. Engendered dynamics thus "inform questions of personal, collective, as well as national identity; the distribution of resources and services; and the very manner in which Brazilians conceive and act on their Brazillianness."<sup>345</sup> Therefore, considerations of not only Afro-Brazilians' place within society, but also the role of regional racism in the organization of Brazil's social hierarchy complicate questions of national identity and the history of racial composition. It is in this context that discussions of the *nordestino*, or "Northeasterner" emerged as a sub-product of racial implications within the complex power structure of Brazil.

### **Race in the Northeast: *Nordestino***

According to historian Stanley E. Blake, the "development of Northeastern regional identity shaped debates about Brazilian national identity, citizenship, and state power...and did not simply reflect the declining economic and political status of the region within the

---

<sup>344</sup>Telles, Edward. "Ethnic boundaries and political mobilization among Afro-Brazilians" In *Racial Politics in Contemporary Brazil*. Edited by Michael Hanchard, Duke University Press, 1999.

<sup>345</sup>Hanchard, Michael. *Racial Politics in Contemporary Brazil*. Duke University Press, 1999, p.15.

nation but became an essential component of Brazilian national identity.”<sup>346</sup> In other words, state efforts to study, analyze, and comprehend the *nordeste* and its population were elements of an extensive nation-building process during the twentieth century. The government saw such questions as crucial for a more efficient management of Brazilian society. It was precisely through the understanding of regional characteristics that Brazil constructed its national identity.

One of the first works that focused on the Northeast and its population was the work of Brazilian journalist Euclides da Cunha, named *Os Sertões*, or “Rebellion in the Backlands” published in 1902. It covered the popular revolt of Canudos, which occurred in the state of Bahia in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, spurred by a mixture of religious zeal and political aspirations.<sup>347</sup> Hundreds of poor laborers and runaway slaves subsequently moved to Canudos, which functioned as an egalitarian community under the leadership of a spiritual guide named Antonio Conselheiro.<sup>348</sup> Threatened by his arguments for equality, and by the problems to agricultural production caused by the massive exodus of land workers, the landowning elite accused the community of defending subversive ideas. After local government intercepted a supply of wood destined to build a church in Canudos, rumors that Conselheiro and his men were going to attack surfaced leading first the regional, and later the federal, governments to send troops to dismantle the settlement. However, residents of Canudos resisted for several months and news of the prolonged struggle stimulated public curiosity in Brazil’s Southeast about the country’s remote region. Despite the fact that

---

<sup>346</sup>Blake, Stanley E. *The Vigorous Core of Our Nationality: Race and Regional Identity in Northeastern Brazil*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011, p. viii.

<sup>347</sup> Cunha, Euclides da. *Backlands: The Canudos Campaign*. Penguin Classics, 2010.

<sup>348</sup>Skidmore, Thomas. *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change*. 2nd ed. Oxford University Press, USA, 2009.

community succumbed to federal power in 1897 in what is currently considered a true massacre, the episode became a symbol of popular resistance.<sup>349</sup>

The account of the Canudos revolt by Euclides da Cunha gained a wide readership and became a popular literary work in Brazil. His vivid descriptions of the region's characteristic inhabitant as "lighter than the musket that he bore; lean, dried up, fantastic, melting into a sprite, weighing less than a child; his bronze skin stretched tautly over his bones, rough as the epidermis of a mummy"<sup>350</sup> caught readers' attention. His narrative of the *nordestino's* daily lives and constant struggles created curiosity in Brazil's Central, Southeastern, and Southern populations, as well as a greater concern by government officials for the region's control. That new attention ultimately translated into public interest in understanding the region and its inhabitants. The trend of studying the Northeast in theoretical and sociological terms gained popularity in the early 1900s. Academics gradually came to view the *nordestino* as a product of a rugged terrain and, due to his mixed racial elements, as the quintessential Brazilian.<sup>351</sup>

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, while Brazil's government generally directed increased attention to problems such as deficient public health, politicians in the country also realized that those same issues remained a challenge in the Northeast, especially relating to epidemics and hygiene. This realization, spurred by sanitary and public health reports from institutions such as the Oswaldo Cruz Institute, and by international agencies such as the

---

<sup>349</sup>Levine, Robert M. *Vale of Tears: Revisiting the Canudos Massacre in Northeastern Brazil, 1893-1897*. University of California Press, 1995.

<sup>350</sup>Blake, Stanley E. *The Vigorous Core of Our Nationality: Race and Regional Identity in Northeastern Brazil*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011, p.71.

<sup>351</sup>Blake, Stanley E. *The Vigorous Core of Our Nationality: Race and Regional Identity in Northeastern Brazil*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011.

Rockefeller Foundation,<sup>352</sup> further enhanced the belief that *nordestinos* were naturally an inferior group, an argument that carried distinct racial implications. Despite allegations that government neglect had contributed to dire conditions in the region, most analysts emphasized the population's backwardness, either directly or indirectly. One such report commented on the *nordestino's* civic ignorance:

It is rare to find an individual who knows what Brazil is...the government is, for these pariahs, a person who rules the people, and they are aware of the existence of government because this "person" rules through the annual collection of taxes. Asked if these lands are connected with each other, constituting one nation, one country, they said that they did not understand any of this.<sup>353</sup>

These assessments of the country's Northeast, while generating a real portrait of the region's challenges and deficiencies that government officials needed to undertake health and education reforms, also became seemingly-scientific evidence of the *nordestino's* inferiority in relation to the rest of Brazil. Observers called special attention to the *sertanejos*, a new term used to refer to *nordestinos* who lived in the region's arid interior, as opposed to those living on the region's coast.<sup>354</sup> Informed by such surveys, state and local governments launched a social hygiene movement in 1930s under the premise that the

---

<sup>352</sup>For more information on the role of the Rockefeller Foundation in Latin America, and its work with its Brazilian counterpart Oswaldo Cruz Institute, see Armus, Diego. *Disease in the History of Modern Latin America: From Malaria to Aids*. Duke University Press, 2003. And Cueto, Marcos. *Missionaries of Science: the Rockefeller Foundation and Latin America*. Indiana University Press, 1994.

<sup>353</sup>Blake, Stanley E. *The Vigorous Core of Our Nationality: Race and Regional Identity in Northeastern Brazil*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011, p. 99.

<sup>354</sup>McCann, Bryan. *Hello, Hello Brazil: Popular Music in the Making of Modern Brazil*. Duke University Press, 2004.



government had both the duty and the right to intervene in order to try to improve the physical development of Northeasterners.

A factor that influenced this trend was the increase in popularity of eugenics among the Brazilian intellectual and political elite during the 1920s and 1930s. Reformers, medical professionals, and even educators embraced this European and American “science” that aimed to control and perfect population conditions through racial “improvement.” However, Brazilian eugenicists strived to distance themselves from practices such as forced sterilization and execution. Instead, they focused on what they considered “positive eugenics,” meaning hygiene improvement through education and public health campaigns.<sup>355</sup>

It is noteworthy that while eugenicists in southeast regions such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro often referred to the natural inferiority of certain races, eugenicists from northeastern areas, such as Pernambuco, rarely made racial commentaries. According to historian Stanley E. Blake, this distinction occurred since the Northeast already presented a population that was racially mixed in its majority and that, as such, subconsciously accepted and was aware of the alleged *nordestino* inferiority. In this sense, even eugenic discourse was tailored to regional characteristics, demands, and circumstances.<sup>356</sup>

In the 1930s, another concern about the physical constitution of the *nordestino* gained greater attention: hunger. Initially, studies and surveys of residents’ eating habits seemed to indicate that they made poor nutritional choices due to ignorance, which resonated with the widespread belief in their intellectual inferiority. However, after a closer

---

<sup>355</sup>Stepan, Leys. *The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America*. Cornell University Press, 1996.

<sup>356</sup>Blake, Stanley E. *The Vigorous Core of Our Nationality: Race and Regional Identity in Northeastern Brazil*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011.

look at national survey data, a Pernambucan doctor and professor called Josué de Castro published a report in 1935 stating that *sertanejos*, specifically, ate poorly not due to a lack of information, but rather due to inadequate financial means. Simply put, they were malnourished not as a product of an ignorant regional culture, but because of poverty. When interpreted in light of current historical and sociological considerations of the Northeast, such a conclusion sounds obvious. However, given the racial preconceptions of the time, this new realization helped gain greater public support for the plight of the *nordestino* population, painting them more as victims of an exploitative system than as a merely ignorant mass. De Castro's novel interpretation also helped explain the physical differences between Northeastern and Southern Brazilians. His study suggested that Northerners, normally portrayed as weaker, and shorter, than Southern counterparts, had a fragile physical constitution due to negative socioeconomic status, rather than inferior racial stock.<sup>357</sup>

Still in the 1930s, another element of racial studies gained greater attention in the Brazilian academic milieu: racial categorization. It was through the reexamination of the country's racial elements and the popularity of Gilberto Freyre's work, *Casa Grande e Senzala* that both intellectuals and the public arrived at a new acceptance of miscegenation. However, while it became acceptable to embrace racial mixture, Brazilians still commonly valued whiteness as a superior trait, and intermarriage became a positive stage in the long process of *branqueamento*, or "whitening."<sup>358</sup>

---

<sup>357</sup>Blake, Stanley E. *The Vigorous Core of Our Nationality: Race and Regional Identity in Northeastern Brazil*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011.

<sup>358</sup>Needell, Jeffrey D. "Identity, Race, Gender, and Modernity in the Origins of Gilberto Freyre's Oeuvre." *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 100, no. 1 (Feb., 1995), pp.51-77.

Following Freyre's intellectual acclaim, other academics during the pre-World War II years addressed the question of Brazil's racial constitution, and attempted to create a classification system that adequately portrayed the country's unique racial mixture. Generally speaking, most intellectuals based their studies on the consideration of three "original races", meaning Europeans, Indians, and Africans. Following those initial categories, primary terms such as *branco* (white), *mulato* (mulattoe), and *negro* indicated the main groups on the black-white racial continuum. In between those categories were several racial denominations indicating the different shades of *negritude*, or "blackness," and the original elements of racial mixture. In this sense, terms such as *pardo* (brown), *mulato* (referring to a darker brown skin color), *cafuzo* (the offspring of an indian and a *negro*), and *mameluco* (European and Indian), were used as part of the classification system.<sup>359</sup>

The tendency of classifying the population according to racial constitution and an individual's origin also caught on among the Northeastern intellectual elite, and soon categories such as *sertanejo* and *caboclo* were used to represent race and origin. The first referred to the inhabitants of the dry, interior backlands of the *nordeste*, while the latter was a general term indicative of a person's low social status and racial "blackness". This trend was also greatly influenced by the publication, in 1937, of yet another book by Gilberto Freyre, *Nordeste*, or "Northeast." In this work, he framed the region's tradition in monoculture as a social pathology that helped generate severe racial and economic problems. He clearly rejected racial determinism, arguing that the region's relative backwardness was due to structural and not racial, challenges.<sup>360</sup>

<sup>359</sup>Blake, Stanley E. *The Vigorous Core of Our Nationality: Race and Regional Identity in Northeastern Brazil*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011.

<sup>360</sup>Santos, Martha S. *Cleansing Honor With Blood Masculinity, Violence, and Power in the Backlands of Northeast Brazil, 1845-1889*. Stanford University Press, 2012.

Freyre's considerations of the *nordeste* also reflected the history of how the region had developed. During the 1920s and 1930s, Brazilians came to think of the Northeastern region as a geographical and cultural entity separate from the rest of the North, as a reaction to national changes. Fearing that they were losing their political and economic importance relative to the Southeastern states of Brazil, traditional landowning and intellectual Northeastern elites attempted to forge a unique regional identity that could represent Brazil's cultural diversity. Through the use of symbols and folklore, the Northeast elite created a "new unity to protect them from the threat of being dissolved into a greater whole they could no longer dominate; the Brazilian nation."<sup>361</sup> Meetings such as the Regionalist Conference of Recife in 1926, and through the foundation of formal institutions such as the Regionalist Center of the Northeast in 1924, the political elite fashioned a regional identity that sought to compete against that of Brazil's Southern states. Through the use of propaganda, and valorization of the *nordeste's* unique culture, these events and agencies established "and institutionalized even among the less privileged sectors of the population the idea of the 'Northeast', gradually developed and shaped until it became the most clearly defined concept in the country."<sup>362</sup>

It was also in the 1930s that the federal state participated in the formulation of a national identity founded on the notion of a truly integrated country. In this context, perceptions of *nordestinos* as a highly inferior race distanced from the rest of the country did not aid the construction of a positive national image. Thus, national officials attempted to construct the persona of the *homem do nordeste*, or "man of the Northeast", an individual

<sup>361</sup>Albuquerque Jr., Durval Muniz; Hallewell, Laurence. "Weaving Tradition: The Invention of the Brazilian Northeast", *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 31, No. 2, Brazilian Northeast: Globalization, Labor, and Poverty (March, 2004), p. 44.

<sup>362</sup>Ibid, p.49.

strong enough to endure the rigors of the region's dry climate and soil, yet mixed enough racially to personify Brazilian uniqueness. Furthermore, by granting Northeasterners the condition of being almost a separate racial category, federal reports somewhat distanced the region and its inhabitants from traditional negative considerations that surrounded categories such as *negro* and *indio*, "Indian."<sup>363</sup> This helped create a new sense of destiny, heroism, and national unity since the Northeast could now be considered the cradle of the true Brazilian essence, despite its enduring economic backwardness. This was the process that created a contradictory conflict in the national image of the Northeast, one that either portrayed it as the quintessential source of Brazilian culture, or as the undeniable and unwavering evidence of the country's persistent developmental problems. Evidence of this new attempt to reformulate perceptions of the region appeared in the 1941 statement by Pernambuco's federal *interventor*,<sup>364</sup> which clearly contradicted traditional views of *nordestinos* as lazy, laid-back, passive, and ignorant people:

Here [Northeastern] man is better than geography. Better than the natural factors that he has to defeat with his mind and with his arms. Man, in the Northeast, is in an agitated state when working. He is always moving...he has initiative, or is seeking to possess it.<sup>365</sup>

---

<sup>363</sup>Santos, Martha S. *Cleansing Honor With Blood Masculinity, Violence, and Power in the Backlands of Northeast Brazil, 1845-1889*. Stanford University Press, 2012.

<sup>364</sup>These were federally appointed state governors that operated directly under the control of the country's president. Created during the Vargas Era as a tool to increase state centralization and control over Brazil's territory, the "interventors" played an important role in shaping national identity and in integrating the country's many regions into a more homogenous political body. For more information see Levine, Robert M. *Father of the Poor?: Vargas and his Era*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.

<sup>365</sup>Blake, Stanley E. *The Vigorous Core of Our Nationality: Race and Regional Identity in Northeastern Brazil*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011, p.185.

With the country's industrial growth during the Vargas years, and the greater focus on economic achievements by the populist governments of 1945 to 1964, which includes the Kubitschek presidency, economic-based analysis of the region took center stage. Since the Northeast was constantly plagued by drought and by a significant gap between its social classes, the considerations were not positive, and the image of the region as a harbor of ignorant and backwards population intensified. Consequently, by the 1960s, the region became the embodiment of failed developmentalist projects. With the advent of the military dictatorship, the region gained some political attention and, especially in the 1980s, benefitted from federal intervention in production and administration to improve its social conditions.<sup>366</sup> However, the contradiction between the region's often dire economic situation and its identity as the source of Brazil's unique and valued culture remained.

Most contemporary historians of Latin America, such as Barbara Weinstein and Stanley E. Blake, agree that racialized regional identities often make up for the existing gap between a country's idealized homogenous character, and its true heterogeneity. Meanwhile, national interests justify the need to simplify complex regional characteristics for the sake of greater integration and territorial administrative transparency.<sup>367</sup> In this sense, Brazil is composed of various regional groups, while all of them are essentially Brazilians. Therefore, regionalism and nationalism are not contradictory terms, but rather complement each other and reflect the nature of a country's national image in light of its internal diversity. Ultimately, in this context, the *nordestino* "became, and remains...a powerful

---

<sup>366</sup>Blake, Stanley E. *The Vigorous Core of Our Nationality: Race and Regional Identity in Northeastern Brazil*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011.

<sup>367</sup> Weinstein, Barbara. "Developing Inequality" In *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 113, No. 1 (Feb., 2008) pp.1-18.

racialized symbol of the region's ambiguous and changing status within the nation",<sup>368</sup> while contributing to the important process of nation-building. Still more important, the conflict between the region's contradictory roles also affected the population of *nordestinos* who migrated to Brasilia to build the new capital. Those men and women carried with them their strong ties to their regional origins, while seeking to stake a more permanent position in that new frontier space, and within the broader national scope of modern Brazil.

### **Migrants: Brasilia's Working Population**

Analyzing the migratory process of foreigners who entered Brazil in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, historian Boris Fausto argued that immigration is a process that involves both separation and assimilation.<sup>369</sup> While the traveler opts for a physical separation from his original hometown, he never entirely erases past traditions and values from his memories. In that sense, when relocating, the individual carries his past experiences into the new setting that will soon be transformed into his new domestic headquarters. Subsequently, the process of assimilation begins, in which the old is mingled with the new in an attempt to forge a novel identity. For Fausto, people's spatial relocation is often driven by compulsion and by the hope for a better future, but migrants will also be constantly, and forever, questioning their decision. Some will eventually embrace their new identity, while others will attempt to hold on to their memories with often romanticized nostalgia.<sup>370</sup> The latter is often the group

---

<sup>368</sup>Blake, Stanley E. *The Vigorous Core of Our Nationality: Race and Regional Identity in Northeastern Brazil*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011, p.226.

<sup>369</sup>Fausto, Boris. "Imigracao: cortes e continuidades". In *Historia da Vida Privada no Brasil Vol. 4*, Ed. Fernando A. Novais. Companhia das Letras, 1998.

<sup>370</sup>Ibid.

that decides to return to their place of origin, but not returning as a “failure, but returning as victorious.”<sup>371</sup>

Fausto’s analysis of immigration can also be extended to a closer examination of the workers who migrated from diverse regions in Brazil to work in the construction of Brasilia. For most, the driving force was the expectation of financial gain. While many embraced their new identity as either *candango* or *pioneiro*, terms that will be discussed further on, others preferred to return home with material gains to show for their time away. Regardless of the final outcome, most of the thousands of workers moving to Brasilia in the mid-1950s believed that they could improve their financial status, and that the new capital truly represented a new beginning. The song written by Ataulfo Alves in the 1950s, under the title *Samba in Brasilia*, summarized the spirit of the common worker arriving in the city:

I know I am a hard worker Mr. Give me some land, support my family and  
I will go. I will take Conceição and Dorotilia, guitar and drums, I will make  
samba in Brasilia.<sup>372</sup>

Those verses meant to reflect the spirit of the men and women who left their homes in search of a better life. Newspaper headlines around the country in the 1950s portrayed the new capital as truly a modern *El Dorado*. In bars and town gatherings, citizens shared stories of workers getting rich in the Brazilian *cerrado*. Not surprisingly, such tales of success, supported by Kubitschek’s national campaign and propaganda emphasizing

---

<sup>371</sup>Ibid, p.19.

<sup>372</sup>“Encanto Nao se Transfere”, Especial Veja Brasilia 50 Anos, accessed October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2012, <http://veja.abril.com.br/especiais/brasil/encanto-nao-se-transfere-p-124.html>



modernization and economic growth, attracted workers from all regions, but mostly from the Brazilian Northeast and central states.

The national campaign to recruit workers to build Brasilia involved elements of historical rupture and recapitulation, alluding to stories of historical grandeur and heroism. Rhetorically, the president denounced past problems that had hampered the country's development, while promising that a new capital could surpass old limits. Newspaper and magazine articles often referred to the rise of Brasilia as "the dawn of a new era,"<sup>373</sup> and also as the realization of the dreams of Tiradentes and the Inconfidentes,<sup>374</sup> Brazil's national heroes. Writers compared the pioneers and *candangos* to the *Bandeirantes*, bands of armed men who had expanded the country's colonial western frontier during the early 1600s, conquering the harsh wilderness in search of precious metals and runaway slaves.<sup>375</sup> In such rhetoric, supporters legitimated their picture of the future through both the negation of the past and an embrace of its myths and heroes. Those approaches were actually complementary and not contradictory; as Holston explains, "while one breaks with the past as it leaps into the future, the other identifies the future as the true realization of Brazil's initial promise, which the intervening years had failed to achieve."<sup>376</sup>

---

<sup>373</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City an Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. The University of Chicago Press, 1989, p. 208.

<sup>374</sup>Tiradentes was one of the participants of the *Inconfidentes* movement that, among other things, called for the foundation of an independent republic in the eighteenth century. For more information see Burns, E. Bradford. *A History of Brazil*. Columbia University Press, 1993.

<sup>375</sup>Much of their appeal is due to another national campaign directed at justifying the negative aspects of their excursions, the raping and extermination of natives, with allegations of nationalism and territorial integration. For a more detailed discussion, see Burns, E. Bradford. *A History of Brazil*. Columbia University Press, 1993. And Levine, Robert M. *The History of Brazil*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

<sup>376</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City an Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. The University of Chicago Press, 1989, p. 208.

However, despite the extensive use of nationalism, symbolism, and imagery in these efforts to attract laborers to Brasilia, few workers who migrated to the future capital were motivated mainly by a patriotic mission. They were, instead, drawn by a sense of adventure, a need to find employment, and a hope that the stories about Brasilia that portrayed it as a wage laborer's *El Dorado* were true. Delcides Abadia who moved to Brasilia in 1957 when he was still a teenager, accompanying his father and the entire family from the neighboring town of Goiânia, Goiás recalled: "the construction of Brasilia was an adventure, alright? I'll be honest with you, when I arrived here I was 18 or 19 years old, it was exciting to be here, this was a *cerrado*, we looked one way and saw wilderness, looked the other way, more wilderness..."<sup>377</sup>

For other early workers, such as Eronildes Guerra de Queiroz,<sup>378</sup> Brasilia was above all a great employment opportunity. Queiroz represents the typical *candango* from the Northeast. Born in 1935, on an old sugar cane plantation in the state of Pernambuco, he toiled in agricultural work from an early age. Often moving seasonally to seek work in other rural regions and urban centers, he heard of the new capital's construction through a radio announcement at a bar. Intrigued, he met truck drivers from São Paulo who informed him that the best route to get to the construction sites was to pass through either São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro. Motivated by stories that promised employment and decent wages for construction workers, he hitchhiked from Recife (Pernambuco) to São Paulo, and then into

---

<sup>377</sup>Interviewed by Vania Lucia Alheiro Rosa and Vera Lucia Pereira Duarte. Information for citation: Silva, Delcides Abadia. *Depoimento – Programa de Historia Oral*. Brasilia, Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal, 1990, p.12.

<sup>378</sup>Based on interview by Maril Guedes da Costa and Vera Lucia Pereira Duarte as part of the Oral History Program of Brasilia's National Archives. Interview done on December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1991. Citation reference: Queiroz, Eronildes Guerra de. *Depoimento – Programa de Historia Oral*. Brasilia, Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal, 1991.

the state of Minas Gerais. From there he caught another truck to Goiânia, a city in the state of Goiás, close to where they were erecting the new capital. Finally, riding on an open-bed truck called *pau-de-arara*,<sup>379</sup> or “parrot-perch”, he arrived in Brasília in 1957. This long journey through the country’s undeveloped interior regions, driving on dirt roads or cutting through the region’s *cerrado* was typically what the *nordestino* migrant endured. Despite the challenges, financially, the struggle promised to be worthwhile.



**Figure 4.** Construction workers on their way to a construction site, on a Novacap truck similar to the *pau-de-araras*. Photo by Mario Fontenelle. Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal.

Similarly, Carlito Alves Rodrigues, a *nordestino* from the state of Ceará, remembered hearing of the capital’s construction in 1956 through a friend. In his mind, the potential financial gain from migrating justified the effort; he thought, “I am going to Brasília, Dr. Juscelino is building Brasília and there we will make money in bucket loads.” Excited by the

<sup>379</sup>This term refers to the trucks that usually transported seasonal agricultural workers in the Northeast. With an open-bed area and benches for seating arrangement, workers would balance themselves while riding the bumpy roads of the country’s interior, perched as parrots normally do when transported in a cage. This analogy is what gave this transportation method its name, and it is still found today especially in the agricultural areas of the Northeast or the Central states of Brazil.

promise of a new and better life, he traveled to the city on a *pau-de-arara* truck, on a trip that lasted twenty-nine days through the Brazilian wilderness. According to him, “there were no roads, no bridges, we crossed farms...braved heavy rainfall...slept under makeshift boards.”<sup>380</sup>

Another immigrant that made a life for himself in Brasilia was George Raymond Homer, an American born in California in 1919. Homer arrived in Brazil for the first time in 1944, as a navy officer sent to a military base in the Northeast that served Allied interests during World War II. Falling in love with the region, he returned in 1947, married a Brazilian woman, and eventually moved to Brasilia to open a construction shop in the Free City. Homer’s testimony and memories of that time offer a unique outsider perspective on the native Brazilians that migrated to Brasilia. In his own words, after analyzing how the different social and regional groups interacted in the frontier space of the future capital, he concluded that “the original *brasiliense*<sup>381</sup> was a different person...he had to be an adventurer...no one that was doing well in Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo (or elsewhere) would move to this wilderness (if they did) there was a problem, either financial or personal, something that would drive him to start his life again.”<sup>382</sup>

For Homer, the fact that thousands of migrant workers, especially the lower-class construction laborers, had abandoned a past life in order to start a new moment in a frontier space generated an unspoken tradition of respect among the lower classes. In this sense, “a

<sup>380</sup>Interviewed in May 2000 by Viviane Irene Fonseca Dornas and Clemia Lucas de Barros Teixeira. Citation: Rodrigues, Carlito Alves. *Depoimento-Programa de Historia Oral*. Brasilia. Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal, 2000, 13p. p.5. Part of the *Projeto Nucleo Bandeirantes*.

<sup>381</sup>The term was later used, especially since 1970s, to refer to those born in Brasilia. It also served as a negation of the often derogatory term *candango*.

<sup>382</sup>Interviewed on May 4<sup>th</sup>, 1990, by Georgete Medleg Rodrigues and Vera Lucia Pereira Duarte. Citation: Homer, George Raymond. *Depoimento- Programa de Historia Oral*. Brasilia, Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal, 1990, p. 11.

life with that person began the moment you met him. If he was a thief, if he was rich or poor...had nothing to do with you.”<sup>383</sup> This tradition of not judging another person’s past was a coping mechanism to help workers living in the harsh conditions of a frontier space, in a new community that was still inventing its rules and social norms, and that was marked by inequality.

## CHAPTER 6. BRASILIA: INEQUALITIES IN THE FRONTIER

According to Lynda H. Schneekloth,<sup>384</sup> the frontier mythology has been a strong element of social, cultural, and national construction. As both an imagined and created place, and a physical space, the frontier encapsulates the contradiction between a receptive setting and the savage wilderness. Back in 1893 Frederick Jackson Turner formulated what became known as “the Frontier Theory” which defined the United States frontier as a space existing in between the civilized and the barbaric. He wrote, “the frontier is the outer edge of the wave – the meeting point between savagery and civilization.”<sup>385</sup> For Turner and Schneekloth and many observers since, this dualism is the essence of the frontier mythology. While characteristic of westward expansion in United States history, these trends also appeared in the construction phase of Brasilia in the 1950s. That city came to represent the idea of

---

<sup>383</sup>Ibid.

<sup>384</sup>Schneekloth, Lynda H. “The Frontier is Our Home.” In *Journal of Architectural Education* Vol. 49, no. 4 (May, 1996), pp. 210-225.

<sup>385</sup>Turner, Frederick Jackson. *The Frontier in American History*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2011. p.2.

frontier conquest, as seen in comments on the original design by Lucio Costa, who wrote in his *Report of a Pilot Plan for Brasilia*:

Founding a city in the wilderness is a deliberate act of conquest, a gesture after the manner of the pioneering colonial tradition, and the competitor's conception of such a city would be more important. This is particularly so because the city will not be a result of regional planning but the cause of it: its foundation will lead, later, to the planned development of the whole region.<sup>386</sup>

Universal models of frontier expansion, as discussed by Lawrence A. Brown,<sup>387</sup> generally divide the process of territorial occupation into three stages: site selection, land preparation and clearing, and settlement consolidation. This broad model is easily applicable to Brasilia, thus confirming the city as a frontier space. As such, Brazil's planned capital displayed the traditional features of rational settlement, including a hyper-masculine characterization of the wilderness as savage, especially during the early stages of construction. This trait of open territory appealed to many of the builders who migrated to that frontier space. Clementino Candido, one of the men who moved to the site of Brazil's future capital early on, explained his decision by saying, "I wouldn't go to São Paulo nor to Rio de Janeiro because both São Paulo and Rio were places for educated people, and I have no education whatsoever. I'd go to Brasilia because it is only beginning....it is pure wilderness...a place for rough, brute men..."<sup>388</sup>

<sup>386</sup>Cited in Niemeyer, Oscar. "Clearing Brasilia." *Perspecta*, Vol. 34 (2003), pp. 91-93.

<sup>387</sup>Brown, Lawrence; Sierra, Rodrigo; Digiacinto, Scott; Smith, W. Randy. "Urban-System Evolution in Frontier Settings" in *Geographical Review*, vol. 84, no. 3 (Jul. 1994), pp. 249-265.

<sup>388</sup> Interviewed by Ana Claudia Correa Brandao Gracindo and Marli Guedes da Costa on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 1990. Citation: Candido, Clementino. *Depoimento – Programa de História Oral*. Brasilia, Arquivo Publico do

Candido's sense of Brasilia as a typical rugged setting was also a product of political construct. As Schneekloth argues, "the frontier was invented, not created...it was incomplete as it existed and was therefore in need of civilizing forces..."<sup>389</sup> This generalized description of the frontier perfectly fits the history of how Brasilia was pictured in the public media, constantly referred to as a national hinterland. Supporters of the capital's relocation argued for the civilizing mission behind Kubitschek's national integration plans, as seen in *Jornal do Brasil's* 1956 article that described the project as a "heroic attempt of expanding progress to the country's hinterland." Another newspaper, *Indústria e Comércio*,<sup>390</sup> declared that the capital's move to Brasilia represented "interiorization, enrichment, and a pioneering movement."<sup>391</sup>

Following Schneekloth's analysis of the frontier space is her argument that the "myth of the frontier both reveals and conceals a landscape for sanctioned violence, a place to express conquest and domination."<sup>392</sup> This conclusion also fits the history of Brasilia, where domination and conquest became manifest through acts of social and institutional violence, while hidden behind a discourse of national growth and territorial integration. In this sense, a study of the men who migrated to help build the new capital offers insight into the history of how this new location constructed gender roles within the context of national unity and development. This chapter focuses on discussions of the nationalist discourse that attracted migrant workers to Brasilia, the many forms of social and racial inequalities that defined

---

Distrito Federal, 1990, p.3.

<sup>389</sup>Schneekloth, Lynda H. "The Frontier is Our Home." In *Journal of Architectural Education* Vol. 49, no. 4 (May, 1996), pp. 210-211.

<sup>390</sup>Translates to "Industry and Commerce"

<sup>391</sup>*Industria e Comercio*, December 20<sup>th</sup>, 1956. Public Archives of the Federal District (GDF).

<sup>392</sup>Schneekloth, Lynda H. "The Frontier is Our Home." In *Journal of Architectural Education* Vol. 49, no. 4 (May, 1996), p.210.

rights to the city, along with the different forms of reaction to institutionalized, and spontaneous, organizations or power within that society.

### **Recruitment, Work, and Social Organization**

In order to successfully build a new capital and transfer the nation's political center to the country's interior, Kubitschek created two government agencies: *Companhia Urbanizadora da Nova Capital*<sup>393</sup>, or Novacap, and *Grupo de Trabalho de Brasilia*,<sup>394</sup> or GTB. Novacap was created by a legislative act in 1956, and was charged with building the city and administering its function during the pre-inauguration period. It sponsored the national architectural competition won by Lucio Costa and directed by Oscar Niemeyer. Novacap also recruited personnel to build the city, hiring engineers, architects, administrative staff, and other skilled professionals, as well as thousands of construction workers. The GTB, on the other hand, was only officially created in 1958 and its function was to evaluate, negotiate, and manage the transfer of bureaucratic personnel to Brasilia after the city's inauguration.<sup>395</sup> This signaled a government effort to incorporate civil servants as full citizens of the city, since they were the ones who would receive residential rights to the many government apartments and houses built in Brasilia's Pilot Plan. On the other hand, the workers recruited by Novacap, whether skilled or unskilled, educated or seasonal migrant workers represented a population that was, from the very beginning, expected to leave once construction on the city was complete. This process of legal and planned social exclusion added a new layer to social stratification in Brasilia: the category of

---

<sup>393</sup>Translates to "Urbanizing Company of the New Capital".

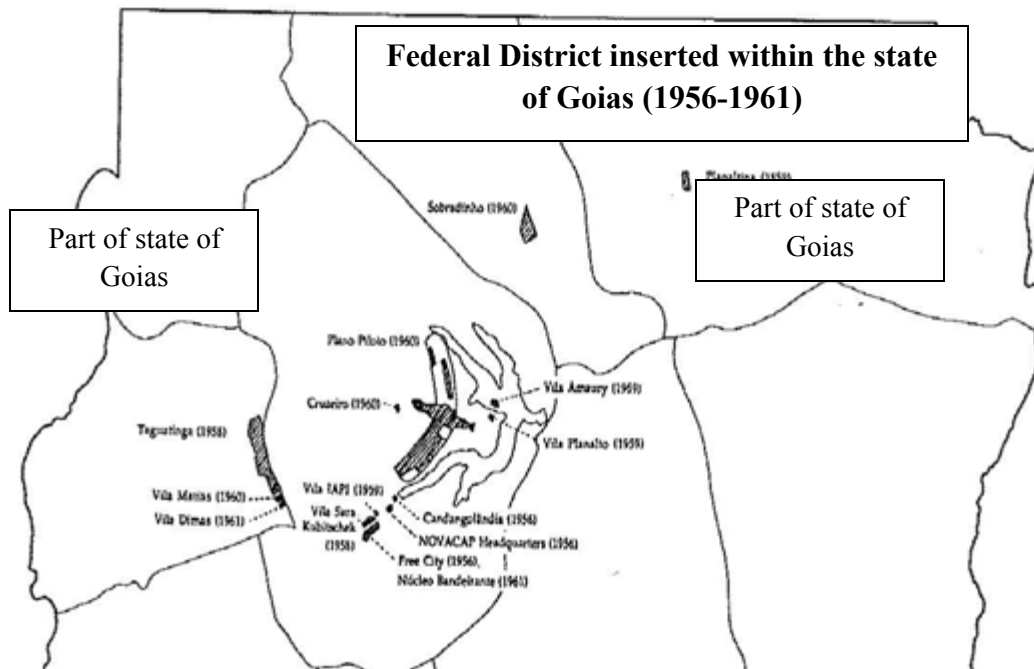
<sup>394</sup>Translates to "Working Group of Brasilia."

<sup>395</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City an Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. The University of Chicago Press, 1989.



civil service and government functionalism. In this sense, above all other social, racial, and class considerations was the title of “civil servant,” which determined an individual’s rightful position within the new, modernist city.

In the process of preparing the land for construction, Novacap divided the area into two main zones of temporary occupation. The first zone’s assigned function was to enable the capital’s physical construction, and was further divided into three subdivisions: Novacap’s operational base, a living space for Novacap’s administrative and technical staff, and finally an area designated to hold the different construction camps set up by the many construction companies that were involved in the building of Brasilia. In map 2 this construction-camp area is approximately located around the settlements of Candangolandia, Novacap Headquarters, and Vila IAPI. The second zone was reserved for commercial establishments that would satisfy the material needs of the rapidly-growing population of construction-site workers. This settlement became known as “The Free City,” due to the government’s concession of four-year tax-free commercial leases to those interested in setting up temporary commercial establishments in the area.



**Figure 5.** Map of Planned and unplanned settlements: Pilot Plan, NOVACAP, and the Free City.<sup>396</sup>

This division of the territory into two main areas was designed to facilitate government control over the capital's construction, especially when it came to recruiting and managing the thousands of workers that Novacap expected to attract. In order to do so, the many companies that received permission to participate in the capital's construction worked with existing government institutions. In particular, the Brazilian government in 1954 had created the National Institute of Immigration and Colonization (INIC), intended to help manage regional migration aimed at further occupying and developing the country's interior.<sup>397</sup> Using INIC resources and staff, Novacap set up migration centers throughout the country to help guide and even transport migrants to Brasília. Those centers packed workers

<sup>396</sup> Based on map in Holston:1989, p. 261.

<sup>397</sup> INIC was considered an important tool for the success of Brazil's "Western March," as planned by then President Getulio Vargas. For more information on state agencies that controlled foreign immigration and regional migration see: Lesser, Jeffrey. *Immigration, Ethnicity, and National Identity in Brazil, 1808 to the Present*. Cambridge University Press, 2013. And Lesser, Jeffrey. *Negotiating National Identity – Immigrants, Minorities, and the Struggle for Ethnicity in Brazil*. Duke University Press, 1999.

into hired trucks or buses, which took them either to an office located in the neighboring town of Anapolis, in the state of Goias, or directly to Novacap's headquarters. At both locations, Novacap staff quickly interviewed workers regarding their skills then sent them to a medical practitioner or health agent that would give them a quick health check, as required by Brazil's labor laws established during the Vargas Era. Once new migrants were pronounced fit for physical labor, they received a work and identification card, and were then directed to a specific company, according to their job allocation.<sup>398</sup>



**Figure 6.** Construction workers at an identification post. Photo credits: Mario Fontenelle. Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal.

For many poor workers, especially those migrating directly from the Northeast, this moment represented their first recognition as citizens, and their final inclusion in the body politics since many, prior to this moment, lacked official government identification such as licenses or even birth certificates. These men suffered a poverty of rights, and their inclusion

<sup>398</sup>Ribeiro, Gustavo Lins. *O Capital da Esperança: A Experiencia dos Trabalhadores na Construção de Brasília*. Editora UnB, 2008.

in Brasilia's official body of construction workers signaled for them legal representation under Brazil's labor code.<sup>399</sup> In other words, the sheer fact that they received an official working card upon appointment as a worker in Brasilia represented to these workers their first insertion within the broader framework of nationalism and nation-building. Coming from a poor, and often rural, background, these men and women had previously existed as outcasts of a society that did not recognize them as official citizens. Clementino Candido,<sup>400</sup> a laborer who moved from Minas Gerais to Brasilia in 1958, recalled arriving in the future capital without any formal documentation other than his birth certificate. Recounting the conversation he had with a company manager at the time of his recruitment, Candido's memories evoked feelings of inferiority in relation to the other man's higher social status and rank. Recalling his sense of insecurity, he said:

I was very ashamed of talking to those people [officials] at the time, afraid of them humiliating me. I had no argument [explanation for the lack of documentation]. So he said, 'Where are the documents?' [Candido replied]: 'I don't have any documents. The only document I have is my birth certificate.' [the official answered]: 'No, it is alright.'<sup>401</sup>

After the agent gave Candido his work card, he told the worker to go to the department of material resources in order to get his tools, clothes, a pillow, and a blanket. Likewise,

Joana Dantas,<sup>402</sup> a woman from the poor agricultural interior of Northeast who worked as a

<sup>399</sup>Levine, Robert M. *Father of the Poor? Vargas and His Era*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.

<sup>400</sup>Interviewed by Ana Claudia Correa Brandao Gracindo and Marli Guedes da Costa on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 1990. Citation: Candido, Clementino. *Depoimento – Programa de História Oral*. Brasilia, Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal, 1990.

<sup>401</sup>Ibid, p.4.

<sup>402</sup>Interviewed on December 19<sup>th</sup>, 2005, by Helcy Fatima Bonifacio Perez Nunes and Marta Meneleu B. Gracindo Cardoso as part of the Oral History Program of the National Archives of Brasilia's Federal District. Dantas' interview is confusing, and she cannot remember the exact date of her arrival in Brasilia. However, she

cleaning lady in Brasilia at the time of its inauguration, never even knew her birthday. She said, “the date I don’t know...at the time no one knew numbers, or anything...didn’t know about any (birth) registration.”<sup>403</sup> Far from being an exception, such experiences formed a common narrative of separation from the formal structure of government and civic life among migrants from poor agricultural communities, especially in the Northeast and in the interior regions of Brazil’s Northern, and Central states.

The process of recruiting, distributing, and managing workers within the construction site seems quite strict. Yet once a worker was formally registered with Novacap or with a specific construction company, he could freely change jobs, and even firms, in a setting that was as brutal as it was competitive. This meant that companies were constantly trying to outbid each other in a brutal wage competition. The need for manual labor was so significant that businesses also relied on other private enterprises that operated outside of the government realm and that often recruited men from the Northeast’s most remote, and isolated, regions. This context of a free-for-all labor market represented enormous monetary opportunities for the workers, including the chance to change from the role of unskilled to skilled laborer with greater ease. In fact, not much was required for a worker to be classified as “skilled,” and since Novacap had no time to test each worker’s abilities, its agents relied on the laborer’s accounts of previous jobs and professional skills. Likewise, after working on a specific job a worker could claim that he had gained special skills and thus could seek a different job under the “skilled” category, which also meant higher wages. This professional mobility appealed to workers and, for those men used to unemployment and exploitation, it

---

recollects that she was there during the inauguration ceremonies. She will be discussed further in a following chapter.

<sup>403</sup>Citation: Dantas, Joana. *Depoimento – Programa de História Oral*. Brasília, Arquivo Público do Distrito Federal, 2005, p.1.

also increased their pride in participating not only in the construction of the nation's future capital, but also in finally being recognized as dignified citizens and workers.

In spite of the relatively free labor market, Novacap strictly controlled the masses of construction workers by requiring every laborer to go through official registration. After this process was completed, they could easily navigate within that professional realm, but in order to have access to such wages, professional opportunities, and legal recognition, they had first to undergo the registration process at the identification centers of either Anapolis or at Novacap's headquarters.<sup>404</sup> Formal registration also gave workers a set of benefits, such as the guarantee of constant work, free housing and cheap dining options within the different construction camps, and the opportunity to accumulate overtime - which most men did to further complement their monthly salaries. Wages varied from seven to eight US cents an hour, depending on the occupation. These numbers were generally higher than that of other regions, and the opportunity of accumulating overtime hours in a setting of non-stop work further enticed migrants to move to Brasilia.<sup>405</sup> However, Novacap's requirements also ensured that workers would not attempt to stay in the city once construction was complete, or so government agents hoped.

In order to be eligible for benefits such as free lodging and cheap meals, workers had to live in the construction camps that were closed to women and children. With this rule, Novacap's leaders intended to attract only male workers. They hoped that by doing so, family ties would motivate these men to return to their hometowns after the capital's

---

<sup>404</sup>Ribeiro, Gustavo Lins. *O Capital da Esperanca: A Experiencia dos Trabalhadores na Construcao de Brasilia*. Editora UnB, 2008.

<sup>405</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City an Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. The University of Chicago Press, 1989.

completion. Nonetheless, as word of Brasilia's opportunities spread, women and entire families also migrated to the city, many in search of their husbands or paternal figures. Since women and families were not allowed within the boundaries of construction camps lodgings, they settled in the Free City and paid the high rental prices that were charged within that space or, more commonly, squatted in illegal settlements around the area. With this, Brasilia's population of unwanted, unplanned, and illegitimate inhabitants grew, which proved a challenge for the capital's urban planners. It is ironic that it was the government's recruitment of male workers, the exclusion of their families, and the stifling of greater community ties between laborers and the space they were building that consequently engendered greater inequality and social conflict.

The fact that everything had to function at a fast pace in order to meet the inauguration deadline meant that often officials failed to check workers' qualifications. That shortcut generated a dangerous situation, with unskilled laborers working in areas that required previous technical knowledge. Hilderval Teixeira, an engineer who arrived in Brasilia in 1957,<sup>406</sup> told the story of an illiterate worker that was previously employed as a brick counter in a factory; when screeners asked what his previous job was, he humbly answered *contador*, and authorities then gave him a job as an accountant in Novacap. The joke refers to the word's meaning since in Portuguese *contador* means both the formal title of "accountant" and simply one who normally "counts". Thus, rather than inquiring in detail about the man's experience, the public servant at the screening post assumed that he meant the formal job of "accounting" and proceeded to place him in that position. While that

---

<sup>406</sup>Interviewed on November 23, 1989, by Georgete Medleg Rodrigues and Renato Tarciso Barbosa de Sousa for the Oral History Program of Brasilia's National Archives. Citation: Teixeira, Hilderval. *Depoimento – Programa de História Oral*. Brasilia, Arquivo Público do Distrito Federal, 1989.

particular story may be apocryphal, the point accurately reflects the unorganized structure of the work environment in Brasilia, which partly explains why so many accidents and deaths among workers occurred.

Construction work in Brasilia was a dangerous endeavor, partially due to the number of unskilled laborers employed in areas that required specific training, but also due, in part, to the long and exhausting work hours. Most construction workers were interested in working extra hours for additional pay. Many wanted to send money back to family in their hometowns, while others desired to accumulate as much wealth as possible in order to assure a better life if they eventually had to return to their places of origin. Since the construction plans were on a tight schedule, government benefitted from laborers' enthusiasm for working long hours. However, according to the Labor Laws passed by Vargas in 1943, an employee could only accumulate two hours of extended work beyond the normal eight hour shift. In this sense, the long work day that often extended into thirty six working hours clearly violated legal conditions.<sup>407</sup> Due to the need for quick construction in order to meet the inauguration deadline of 1960 set by Kubtischek, authorities chose to look the other way. Novacap had centralized powers that allowed it to ignore such illegal methods, a pattern facilitated by the lack of a formal written agreement between laborer and employer stipulating the extra hours.

Referring to the rough conditions of such long hours, Clementino Candido described how the typical construction work environment in Brasilia set the stage for accidents. He recalled, "[while we dug] a hole forty-five meters deep, the 'guy' slept...forgot everything,

---

<sup>407</sup>Ribeiro, Gustavo Lins. *A Capital da Esperanca. Brasilia: Estudo sobre uma Grande Obra da Construcao Civil*. M.A. thesis, Graduate Program in Anthropology, Univeristy of Brasilia (UnB), 1980.



napped and [lost control of] the crane, which fell, caught another [man] and tore off his neck”.<sup>408</sup> Another problem that the workers faced was the lack of physical protection from injury on the job.<sup>409</sup> Due to the often improvised nature of construction labor in the different sites, authorities did not require or even encourage the use of helmets and other safety gear. The history of Brasilia’s construction is full of stories of deaths from work-related accidents and men whose limbs had to be amputated.

While the government thus neglected much of the responsibility for protecting workers, the state actively embraced the function of social controller as a way of regulating the lives of over twenty thousand<sup>410</sup> men living under frontier conditions. Through the process of recruiting and managing a large body of workers, authorities attempted to create a system that could facilitate worker control. Their regulations and practices also generated, perhaps as a side effect, an unequal social structure. Work related benefits and residential rights were distributed unevenly, giving different groups of residents disparate claims to city life.

While Novacap regulated the zone set aside for the capital’s physical construction and its management, government agencies did not closely monitor or regulate the second area of initial settlement in Brasilia, the Free City. Called “Free City” due to the lack of taxes and to a greater moral freedom, the area was first established in 1956 and housed a growing number of pensions, lodgings, hotels, bars, restaurants, and general stores. Many of

---

<sup>408</sup>Interviewed by Ana Claudia Correa Brandao Gracindo and Marli Guedes da Costa on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 1990. Citation: Candido, Clementino. *Depoimento – Programa de Hlstory Oral*. Brasilia, Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal, 1990, p.10.

<sup>409</sup>Ribeiro, Gustavo Lins. *O Capital da Esperanca: A Experiencia dos Trabalhadores na Construcao de Brasilia*. Editora UnB, 2008.

<sup>410</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City an Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. The University of Chicago Press, 1989, p.223.

the first entrepreneurs, who arrived in Brasilia during the period of 1957 to 1959, benefitted from government subsidies and expanded their enterprises, thus initiating a local commercial tradition. That history spurred the growth of new middle and upper classes that were not connected to Brazil's public sector, which was the planned rightful heir of the new capital. According to government plans, after the capital's inauguration, the transfer of state bureaucracy from Rio de Janeiro to Brasilia would include the transfer of thousands of government workers. Those civil servants were the desired inhabitants of the new capital and, as such, city planners intended for them to occupy the residential areas of Brasilia's Pilot Plan.<sup>411</sup>

Ultimately, the Free City represented what Holston called a "capitalist city on the fringes of a planned economy", and it was certainly an "open city. In contrast to the construction zone, it was immediately accessible to all: to those just off the bus, to those awaiting documentation for construction work, to those rags-to-riches dreamers, to those who preferred the routines of service sector employment to the rigors of construction, to those in the oldest of professions...all migrants could enter the Free City freely, could find a place to live freely, could find work freely – freely meaning, of course, in accordance with individual means."<sup>412</sup> It was there that class differences appeared most obvious, taking the form of a greater prejudice against the low-brow construction workers who were limited to the restraints of camp lodgings. Those migrating with their families, or those seeking work outside the strict lines of Novacap's construction corps, generally could not afford lodging in the pre-determined area of the Free City. As an alternative, those laborers and families

---

<sup>411</sup>Tamanini, L. *Brasília : memória da construção*. 2nd ed. Brasília DF: Projecto Editorial, 2003.

<sup>412</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City an Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. The University of Chicago Press, 1989, p. 224.

clustered in makeshift settlements around the Free City. According to the national census of 1959, the population of the Free City and its surrounding areas grew from 2,212 in 1957 to 7,033 in 1958.<sup>413</sup> This increase in migration occurred due to the flood of official propaganda promoting opportunities in Brasilia, and also because of severe regional draughts that repeatedly struck Brazil's northeastern region. In time, social and racial prejudices evolved also within the boundaries of the Free City.

### **Nationalist Discourse and Inequality**

When studying the history of Brasilia, there is a clear divide between the symbolism surrounding construction (with its appeal to a civilizing mission), and the discourse of its inauguration, granting civil servants and politicians rights to the city over the poor population of construction workers. In order to attract the working class and to gain popular support for the construction of the new capital, Kubitschek used a language laden with nationalist symbolism, referring to the idea of a civilizing mission. He and other supporters portrayed Brasilia as a promise of a better life, as a symbol of future greatness. Those summoned to build it were attracted by the possible financial gain from construction labor, but were also captivated by the sense of accomplishment; they were the builders of a new Brazil. Most came from rural areas, especially from the Northeast, and were traditionally marginalized and kept out of political and social power.<sup>414</sup> Thus, by participating in the transfer of the nation's capital, members of that population were incorporated, at least

---

<sup>413</sup>Ribeiro, Gustavo Lins. *O Capital da Esperança: A Experiência dos Trabalhadores na Construção de Brasília*. Editora UnB, 2008, p.236.

<sup>414</sup>It is important to remember that at that time voting rights, for instance, were limited to the literate population, and to a population that had a certain amount of financial property. It is also interesting to note that women were granted the right to vote during the Vargas Era in the 1930s, however they were still limited by other social limitations such as finances and literacy.

temporarily, into national history. From mere observers of national development, they shifted into the role of agents of transformation, gaining social value, even if only symbolically.

According to historian James Holston, at the moment of inauguration, the government attempted to portray the city as a place void of a past:

On inauguration day, it (government) planned to reveal a miracle: a gleaming city, empty and ready to receive its intended occupants. This presentation of an inhabitable idea denied the Brazil that the city had already acquired: its population of builders.<sup>415</sup>

Brasilia's architectural plan, or Costa's Master Plan, was designed as a sketch of a city without history. In order to guarantee an unbiased future, promoters represented the new capital not as a product of past experiences and political context, but as a new beginning. It was the moment for starting over with a clean slate, when the country could abandon all the social, moral, and political corruptions of Brazil's past, manifested in its old capital of Rio de Janeiro.<sup>416</sup> This message was further reinforced by the inaugural ceremonies and by the city's practical organization after its inauguration in 1960. Kubitschek planned to unveil the new capital as a bright new city, emerging from the heart of the country, pure and ready to embrace its new population and future. As Holston argues, this view neglected the existence, experiences, and identities of an entire population of Brazilians who participated in the city's construction history: the *candangos*<sup>417</sup>.

---

<sup>415</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City an Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. The University of Chicago Press, 1989 :p. 199.

<sup>416</sup>Wolfe, Joel. *Autos and Progress: The Brazilian Search for Modernity*. Oxford University Press, 2010.

<sup>417</sup>Katinsky, Julio. Xavier, Alberto. *Brasilia, Antologia Critica..* Cosac Naify, 2012.

This contradictory discourse had significant social implications. In asserting that since the city represented a new beginning it had no past, advocates denied Brasília's historical social origins present in the many cultural, social, and racial backgrounds of its population of migrant workers. This also challenged the new social connections of the men and women who toiled for years in Brasília's construction, by reinforcing the malleability of national identity evident in the interchangeability of the terms *candangos* and *pioneiros*. In order for the city to be dehistoricized at its inauguration, government and city planners dealt with the problem of eliminating the undesired social elements: the construction laborers and lower middle class workers. The latter were attracted to Brasília by the promise of gaining commercial benefits, such as a tax exemption on trade. The government initiative of granting commercial rights without the burden of taxation spurred an impressive growth of the Free City.

The original government decree of 1956 stated that commercial permits designated for the Free City area were valid for the period of four years. With that, businesses were allowed to begin, but were expected to shut down once the city was inaugurated.<sup>418</sup> The government later issued different permits for those interested in opening shops and services in Brasília itself, but this distribution was competitive and ultimately restricted to the highest bidder with the strongest political connections. Once granted, those commercial authorizations allowed for the installation of shops in each neighborhood, or *superquadras*, all adequately devised in Costa's Master Plan. As those permanent businesses opened, the commercial enterprises in the Free City were supposed to disappear, along with the entire

---

<sup>418</sup> Ribeiro, Gustavo Lins. *O Capital da Esperança: A Experiência dos Trabalhadores na Construção de Brasília*. Editora UnB, 2008.

settlement and its inhabitants. That vision suggested that in this way, Brasilia could start its new life as a capital devoid of a past history, free of all the unpleasant social problems that were characteristic of Brazil at the time. However, once workers and local trades were established in the Free City, the government gradually realized that the enforcement of its depopulating plan would prove a challenge. This contradiction ensured that Brasilia, originally designed by Costa and Niemeyer as a city free of social prejudices and entanglements, actually morphed into a model of social and spatial stratification, reflecting the way in which government decisions ended up promoting inequality.<sup>419</sup>

Since Brasilia was planned as a new capital, the new seat of Brazilian government, its modernist design intended to incorporate ideas of efficiency and functionality, which would also dictate efficiency in the federal sector. In order to successfully transfer the personnel of the capital from Rio de Janeiro, the government launched both a campaign and a program responsible for determining which and how many public officials and civil servants would move to the new city. Those selected for this new corps of federal employees received the status of legitimate residents of Brasilia, which included rights to move into government housing located either in the *superquadras*' apartments or in planned houses within the Pilot Plan. Ironically, the population deemed eligible to move to Brasilia was expected to live in the housing units built by a population who had the obligation of constructing the city, but who had no right to inhabit the very same spaces they built. This contradiction immediately deepened the social distinctions and ailments that haunted Brazil for years, and that modernist and Corbusien architecture supposedly attempted to prevent.

---

<sup>419</sup> El-Dahdah, Fares. *CASE: Lucio Costa Brasilia's Superquadras*. Harvard Design School, Prestel, 2005.

Before Kubitschek's political campaign to attract support from federal employees in Rio who would eventually transfer to the new capital, he faced another challenge: the attraction and management of a vast body of workers that would build and administer the city. Therefore, as early as 1956, he began a national campaign to draw laborers to Brasilia. The government's project aimed at enlisting workers for three main purposes: the physical construction of the city, the administration of the massive construction project, and the supply of required building materials. Those who answered the call were either simple rural workers, many without any knowledge or experience in the area of construction work, or middle-class engineers, administrative officials, technocrats, and small entrepreneurs. They were also captivated by the mission of forging a new national identity, one that reflected Brazil's new national integration.<sup>420</sup>

In order to maintain public support for the expensive project, the government's campaign used stories of local unity and solidarity as tools to forge a stronger sense of community and purpose among the builders of Brasilia. This discourse of participation consolidated the myth of the humanized frontier, in which men from different and distant regions and realities worked together to conquer the wilderness of the Central Plateau, and the many challenges to the project of building a new city. This mentality was happily embraced by a number of the workers, as seen by how often they repeated such ideas in interviews, reflecting a nostalgic idealism that these men and women still carry. Most claim that during the construction years "everyone helped everyone", there was a general sense of respect and enthusiasm that united men of different cultural, social, and racial elements around a single mission: the construction of a new capital and a brighter national future.

---

<sup>420</sup>Wolfe, Joel. *Autos and Progress: The Brazilian Search for Modernity*. Oxford University Press, 2010.

According to anthropologist James Holston, this generalized perception of solidarity was caused by a physical proximity between the different social classes.

The importance of access to men of power for the lower classes is seen in the many stories about how much contact Kubitschek and other politicians had with the common worker. Jose Jorge Cauhy, who arrived in Brasilia in 1957 to open a business in the Free City, later said that “[Kubitschek] lived amongst the people, he was a man that lived on the streets, moving everywhere in the middle of the crowds...people loved him, ran into him and he shook their hands. He was a great man.”<sup>421</sup> Another worker, Delcides Abadia, interviewed in 1990, remembered seeing Kubitschek arrive on the construction sites by helicopter, land, and from there walk around, still in his suit, meeting and embracing the construction workers while inspecting their work. For Abadia, Kubitschek was the epitome of the humble and popular politician.<sup>422</sup>

Maria Victoria Moreira Caldas who arrived in Brasilia in 1957 along with her father remembers those years living in the frontier space of the future capital with idealized nostalgia. Especially when compared to the hardships and social stratification that followed the inaugural year, that initial experience living in the *cerrado* was marked by solidarity and companionship, Caldas declared. She described life back then as “great, everyone was friendly, everyone helped each other a lot, when someone was in need, everyone helped...no

---

<sup>421</sup>Interviewed by Valda Maria de Queiroz on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2005, and later transcribed and included in the public archives of the Federal District (DF). Information for citation: Cauhy, Jose Jorge. *Depoimento – Programa de Historia Oral*. Brasilia, Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal, 2005. P.17.

<sup>422</sup>Interviewed by Vania Lucia Alheiro Rosa and Vera Lucia Pereira Duarte. Information for citation: Silva, Delcides Abadia. *Depoimento – Programa de Historia Oral*. Brasilia, Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal, 1990.



one lived isolated, everyone knew each other...it was very good, better than what it is today.”<sup>423</sup>

The physical proximity between the different classes within the construction zone during work hours, and also within the commercial area of the Free City triggered a greater feeling of belonging to a larger community, a sense that was motivated by the same nationalist drive. In the harsh frontier environment of Brasilia during its construction years, engineers, bureaucrats, and the common worker shared similar functions in a space that seemed relatively void of class pretensions. In this sense, technocrats and construction workers all navigated the same dusty streets. As many workers pointed out, all shared the negative experience of working and living in the harsh environment of Brazil’s dry and dusty *cerrado*. Brasilia’s red dust covered everyone regardless of class, race, gender, or government position. Many laborers recalled how everyone walked around constantly covered in dust, how clothes were all of the same shades caused by the soil’s natural hues. However, such a solidarity frontier, which Holston called the “democratic frontier,” was nothing short of an illusion maintained by the upper echelons of government to justify the rigors of working life under the premise of national growth. For their part, lower-class workers embraced that myth of solidarity as proof of their worth and place in the process of constructing a new capital and a modern Brazil. Since for many of those laborers, Brasilia represented significant monetary opportunities, if only momentary, the myth prevailed.

Despite the many obstacles and harsh realities they faced, construction workers still remember those years as a time of friendship, equality, and solidarity. Those positive

---

<sup>423</sup>Interviewed by Georgete Medleg Rodrigues and Renato Tarciso Barbosa de Sousa on October 18th, 1989. Caldas, Maria Victoria Moreira. *Depoimento – Programa de Historia Oral*. Brasilia, Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal, 1989. p.3.

memories of the construction years contrast sharply with their feelings of rejection post-inauguration, and with the complex reality of Brasilia's current social stratification. As Holston wrote, "with the capital's inauguration, the *candangos*' sense of solidarity and democracy immediately dissolved."<sup>424</sup> In other words, as inauguration drew near, workers and inhabitants realized the fragility of their position in the new city. Those individuals took measures to gain a stronger foothold, such as the creation of voluntary association and mass mobilization.

### **Negotiating Spaces through Social Mobilization**

Scholars who study social movements, including those in Latin America, often adopt one of two main intellectual approaches: the Political Opportunity Structure (POS) and the New Social Movement (NSM). The POS model is based on a more empirical analysis of current situations and possible gains through the close negotiation with the state and its institutions. It is a model that works well in democratic and decentralized states such as the United States because, among other reasons, grassroots movements, for instance, are able to approach local state agents and use their representation to push for social and political change. The second model, NSM, focuses more on the role of civil society to demand and trigger changes, often against the state's initial will. Both models, as Diane Davis has argued, follow strictly western considerations of state formation, and thus fail to represent Latin American political, cultural, and social characteristics.<sup>425</sup>

---

<sup>424</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City an Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. The University of Chicago Press, 1989, p.215.

<sup>425</sup> Davis, Diane E. "The Power of Distance: Re-theorizing Social Movements in Latin America" In *Theory and Society*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Aug,1999) pp.585-638.

In order to meet the specificities of Latin American social movement history, Davis proposed a new analytical approach in 1999, founded on the premise that space is both a physical and a social construction and that as such it is both the cause and the object of unequal power relationships, political organization and economic structure. In this sense, considerations of space lead to understandings of distance between citizens and the state. This is the core of Davis' proposed theoretical framework. She also rejects the notion that Latin American social movements occur only because of the rivalry between economically powerful actors, civilian or state-represented, and the disadvantaged masses. Instead, she argues, while Latin American states have indeed been generally overbearing, many agents of mobilization come from and act within the state, such as public servants and young politicians. Her approach emphasizes the role that an individual's distance from the state plays in social inscription tendencies, and it fits well within the narrative of the construction of Brasilia. During the late 1950s, builders and inhabitants gradually realized that their different demands were generally not met by the government, and thus social movements began, especially towards the final years of construction, and mainly surrounding issues of legal residency.

At the heart of Brasilia's social unrest during its construction years was the issue of property and land ownership. According to Nicholas Blomley in his article *Law, Property, and the Geography of Violence*, proprietorship entails the right to use land, in this specific case, and to benefit from it. As a process, it necessarily involves the exclusion of others, namely those that will not own a specific property or land tract. Thus, "property's bundle of

rights includes the power to exclude others.”<sup>426</sup> Blomley argued that property, violence, and social order are all interconnected. Since access to property, or land, is a defining element of social position, and a tool of social stratification, those patterns affect relations such as class, gender, and race. Thus, property is so significant that even the formation of a national identity includes meanings of ownership and land use, especially in frontier spaces such as Brasilia. Analyzing the social and legal structures of frontier places, Blomley wrote, “Inside the frontier lie secure tenure, ownership, and state-guaranteed rights to property. Outside lie uncertain entitlements, communal claims, and the absence of state guarantees to property. Inside lies stability and order, outside disorder and violence.”<sup>427</sup> It is precisely this dichotomy between the established rights of certain groups within the designated legal boundaries of Brasilia's new society, and the lack of guarantees of other social groups that created tension in the frontier city during the late 1950s and beyond.

Brasilia's Master Plan clearly dictated that government must prevent the establishment of squatter settlements and shanties, a major problem in Brazil's established urban centers. The goal was that Brasilia “should develop neither the legal nor the illegal periphery of working-class poverty that typically occurs around Brazilian metropolises.”<sup>428</sup> The planned alternative to this was the creation of agricultural colonies and settlements surrounding the city. These rural cooperatives were meant to serve as one option for the new capital's labor force. According to governmental plans, one group of construction workers would move to the agricultural villas after their building work ended, another set would be

---

<sup>426</sup>Blomley, Nicholas. “Law, Property, and the Geography of Violence: the Frontier, the Survey, and the Grid.” In *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. Vol. 93, No. 1 (Mar. 2003) p.121.

<sup>427</sup>Ibid, p.124.

<sup>428</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City an Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. The University of Chicago Press, 1989, p.257.

incorporated into Brasilia's soon-to-be-created service sector, while the rest would return to their hometowns.<sup>429</sup>

Ironically, by 1958, the federal agency Novacap, charged with organizing and administrating the construction and transfer of the nation's capital, decided to build satellite cities to house the original population of Brasilia. This apparent change of heart was spurred by the creation of popular associations among the pioneers to organize the illegal occupation of squatter settlements. Searching for greater legitimacy to their claims, those associations demanded the legalization of settlements, and the establishment of better services such as sewage, electricity, and potable water.<sup>430</sup> The mere creation of such organizations meant that individual claims for greater rights were enhanced into a collective challenge of government authority.

The first association that was successful in its quest for legitimacy lacked a formal political structure and was, instead, simply a group of squatters who negotiated with the government for legalization of seized lands. As early as 1957, workers who could not reside in the construction camps, and who could not afford the high rental prices of the Free City, began to occupy land surrounding the legal settlement.<sup>431</sup> Since the government required a great number of workers for the construction project, initially, authorities generally chose to ignore those illegal settlements. But after a severe drought that affected the Northeast in

---

<sup>429</sup>Silva, Ernesto. *Historia de Brasilia: um sonho, uma esperanca, uma realidade*. Coordenada-Editora de Brasilia, 1971.

<sup>430</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City an Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. The University of Chicago Press, 1989.

<sup>431</sup>Silva, Ernesto. *Historia de Brasilia: um sonho, uma esperanca, uma realidade*. Coordenada-Editora de Brasilia, 1971.

1958, a large number of *nordestinos* migrated to the area, creating a new problem for Kubitschek's government and urban planners.<sup>432</sup>

To ensure that the migrants would not permanently settle in the Free City, the government ordered its security forces, the *Guarda Especial de Brasilia* (GEB, which will be discussed further on) to barricade entrance to the city. However, the masses of poor immigrants camped on the other side of the barricades, and seeking fast legitimization, they soon named their settlement *Vila Sara Kubitshek*<sup>433</sup> in honor of Brazil's First Lady. Furthermore, leaders of the movement spread rumors that Sara had personally authorized the distribution of lots in the area, which produced a massive rush by Free City inhabitants to set up temporary lodgings in the new encampment in order to later claim possession of the land.

By acting quickly, the leaders of the *Vila Sarah Kubitschek* generated an exodus of workers to their area, and thus outmaneuvered the government forces. They also astutely employed the same propaganda techniques that the government used when seeking support for Brasilia's construction, calling on the ideals of nationalism and loyalty. Residents posted banners stating the population's loyalty and gratitude to the First Lady across the city of Brasilia, in hopes that foreign visitors and the media might see and acknowledge them. They also approached the President during one of his visits, and claimed that they were proud of carrying his last name in their settlement's identification. There was also an added element to their encampment: location. Settled around the main highway leading to Brasilia, the rows of makeshift and unplanned houses detracted from the grandness of the capital's construction process, a visual blight evident to any visitor arriving in the city.<sup>434</sup>

---

<sup>432</sup>Epstein, David G. *Brasilia: Plan and Reality*. University of California Press, 1973.

<sup>433</sup>Or Sara Kubitshek Ville.

<sup>434</sup>Epstein, David G. *Brasilia: Plan and Reality*. University of California Press, 1973.

Government leaders hated this and also could not risk tainting their new project with visual evidence of class struggles, since they depended on good publicity to gain and maintain support, especially from Rio de Janeiro. Pressured, Kubitschek declared that the government would build a satellite city located approximately 25 km from the Pilot Plan, to house the poor migrant settlers.<sup>435</sup>

Initially, the leaders of the illegal Vila rejected the offer, but were soon convinced by promises of private home ownership, medical assistance, and with the federal vow that the government would cover all the costs of relocation and construction. Thus, in less than two weeks, in 1958, Novacap transferred 4,000 squatters to their new residence, a city that was formally inaugurated in less than a month, and that gained the new name of *Taguatinga*.<sup>436</sup> While the government shouldered the extra costs of this unplanned construction, it also benefitted from the relative isolation and separation between Brasilia and Taguatinga. The decision, however, set a precedent that later inspired other groups of illegal squatters.

The new legal settlements also generated new land seizures around them, as was the case of Taguatinga. After its inauguration, migrants continued to arrive in Brasilia and, being denied legal housing in both the capital and its new satellite-city, invaded surrounding areas. One example is the settlement around Taguatinga, called *Vila Matias*. In an interview in 1995, community leader Cesar Trajano de Lacerda remembered how residents moved to build new illegal colonies after witnessing the positive outcome of the Vila Sarah Kubitschek land negotiations. In his recollections, a local leader named Matias headed the

---

<sup>435</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City an Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. The University of Chicago Press, 1989.

<sup>436</sup>Silva, Ernesto. *História de Brasília: um sonho, uma esperança, uma realidade*. Coordenada-Editora de Brasília, 1971.

settlement and, under the threat of forcible removal by the GEB, erected a national flag in the center of the town. Around it he organized three rings, the innermost circle made of the community's children, all holding hands. Encircling them were women, and around those were the colony's men. This was what the police force encountered when they arrived to expel the squatters. Trajano also recalled Matias' justification for such symbolic and strategic arrangement: if the police attacked, they would first have to kill the men, "then the women, and then the children", a situation likely to discourage any such violence.<sup>437</sup>

As Matias hoped, a violent confrontation was prevented, and government allowed the squatters to remain in their new settlement. Gradually it became evident that the new immigrants arriving in Brasilia and its satellite-cities were not planning on leaving, and the government would have to find a way to manage the planned capital's unplanned population. Over time, leaders accomplished this in part due to the gradual attraction of industries and new businesses to the area, especially post-inauguration. However, most of Brasilia's later social problems stemmed from this early conflict between planners' desired population control and the practical complications posed by human occupation.<sup>438</sup>

Another case of negotiated spaces and land possession is that of the Free City, where in 1960 residents mounted an official campaign for its legalization and permanence. The settlement was considered legal but temporary, since planners had intended it to be dismantled soon after the capital's inauguration. Created solely to serve the population of builders during Brasilia's formative years, every commercial and land permit would expire

---

<sup>437</sup>Interviewed on September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1995, by Marco Aurelio de Lemos Santos and Tereza Eleuterio de Souza for the Public Archives of the Federal District. Citation information: Lacerda, Cesar Trajano de. *Dwepoimento-Programa de HHistoria Oral*. Brasilia, Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal, 1995.

<sup>438</sup>Epstein, David G. *Brasilia: Plan and Reality*. University of California Press, 1973.



once construction was completed.<sup>439</sup> However, as the settlement grew, and squatters occupied neighboring areas, it became increasingly clear that its inhabitants had other plans.

According to the government's construction plans, entrepreneurs who set up shops with legal permits in the Free City were supposed to transfer their businesses to other locations within the main grid of the Pilot Plan after the city's official inauguration, and after the purchase of commercial leases. Ironically, when the time came, most refused to do so, since the Free City at the time represented greater trade opportunities. Compared to the Pilot Plan area, it already housed a significant population. The Free City's legal structure allowed unregulated commercial activities, while Brasilia's Master Plan restricted physical alterations to the capital's planned commercial zones, and enforced greater market regulations. In other words, while the new capital was still an unknown place, the Free City was an established space with a booming local market and a growing community.<sup>440</sup>

When the capital's inauguration day arrived, the population of the Free City was comprised of three main categories of inhabitants: businessmen with legal permits to trade and with the obligation of later transferring to the Pilot Plan; construction and administrative workers renting in the settlement; and lastly illegal squatters in neighboring makeshift encampments. With the approaching inauguration, the Commercial Association of Brasilia (ACB) initially organized in 1959 to coordinate products and services in the new capital, began to lead a "fixation" campaign against the forces of Novacap. Thus, the movement for the legitimization of the settlement gained greater political significance.<sup>441</sup>

---

<sup>439</sup>Tamanini, L. *Brasília : memória da construção*. 2nd ed. Brasília DF: Projecto Editorial, 2003.

<sup>440</sup>Silva, Ernesto. *História de Brasília: um sonho, uma esperança, uma realidade*. Coordenada-Editora de Brasília, 1971.

<sup>441</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City an Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. The University of Chicago Press, 1989.

The government met ACB's demands with conflicting reactions. While Novacap openly rejected their claims, Kubitschek took a more ambiguous position and alternated between support and rejection. He did not publicly refuse the proposals, but he did not push for the settlement's legalization either. In fact, his presidential mandate expired before any true legal action was taken to resolve the ACB's claims. Following the end of Kubitschek's presidential term in 1961, settlers hoped that the next president, Jânio Quadros, might expedite the legalization process. However, Quadros' government issued a "decompression" order, meaning that the Free City had to reduce its size, transfer some of its local entrepreneurs to the Pilot Plan, and evict illegal squatters. With the threat of eradication, the ACB expanded its support base and created a larger organization called the Pro-Fixation and Urbanization Movement of Nucleo Bandeirante (MPF).<sup>442</sup>

Acting as a broader coalition, the MPF launched a publicity campaign in search of new supporters. Its leaders also used state representatives to lobby in Congress for giving the Free City a new name, *Núcleo Bandeirante* or "Bandeirante Nucleus," as a permanent establishment. In appealing to state representation, the campaign cited the justification that Brasilia was a city built by immigrants from different regions and states, an effective argument that helped the MPF grow its support base. Despite that activism, negotiations between the movement and the government escalated to violent outbreaks in 1960 and 1961, leading authorities to begin demolishing buildings and houses, and to remove local residents. The struggle spread into the streets, and confrontations between police forces and inhabitants occurred. As a result, in 1961, several months before the settlement's official

---

<sup>442</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City an Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. The University of Chicago Press, 1989.

recognition, which happened in December of that year, its population began to contract, with many residents fleeing to neighboring settlements or even returning to their original hometowns.<sup>443</sup>

As circumstances for the Free City looked increasingly grim, a national political event turned things in the residents' favor. President Jânio Quadros resigned the presidency in 25 August, 1961, and was replaced by Vice-President João Goulart.<sup>444</sup> Goulart's politics were based on support from the labor movement and, as an aspiring populist he was sympathetic to the plight of the Free City dwellers. Strengthened by the new presidential support, the MPF saw a significant increase in its allied bases, which finally led Congress to pass a bill on December 20<sup>th</sup>, 1961, ratifying the legal status of the settlement. Thus, the new permanent area renamed *Núcleo Bandeirante* was officially born.<sup>445</sup> After the movement's success, it was dissolved and, instead of remaining a strong political coalition that could represent local residents, it disappeared. In its place remained the ACB, focused mainly on defending the commercial interests of its entrepreneurs.

Despite the Free City's battle with the government over legitimization, its infrastructure and proximity to the Pilot Plan were better than those of other settlements, indicating its population's greater financial and political power. Antonio de Paula Pontes, one of ACB's first presidents, remembered that in 1959 he approached government

---

<sup>443</sup>From 1960 to 1961, the population of the Free City decreased from 21,033 inhabitants to 15,000. Data cited in Holston, James. *The Modernist City an Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. The University of Chicago Press, 1989, p. 342.

<sup>444</sup>For more information on the political background that lead to Quadros' resignation, and on the nature and troubles of the Joao Goulart government see Skidmore, Thomas. *Politics in Brazil 1930-1964: An Experiment in Democracy*. Updated. Oxford University Press, USA, 2007. And Skidmore, Thomas, *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change*. 2nd ed. Oxford University Press, USA, 2009. And Bandeira, Moniz. *A renuncia de Janio Quadros e a crise pre-64*. Editora Brasiliense, 1979.

<sup>445</sup>Tamanini, L. *Brasília : memória da construção*. 2nd ed. Brasília DF: Projecto Editorial, 2003.

representatives to request construction of basic infrastructure in the Free City, such as central water supply, public electricity and paved roads. In response, city leaders told him that the ACB itself should finance such public works. Proud and determined, Pontes replied that he would pursue the matter. The ACB began to raise money itself, through a small fee that was collected monthly from the area's inhabitants. With those new funds, Pontes and his colleagues and eventually managed to offer electric power and other services to many of the Free City's central houses.<sup>446</sup>

In their quest for legalization, the ACB and the MPF also distanced their demands from those of settlers surrounding the Free City area. Instead of incorporating those settlements into what would become the *Núcleo Bandeirante*, they restricted their support base to individuals with ties to the area's commercial sector, further alienating workers and families from lower classes and, often, migrants from the Northeast. Those people were eventually asked to leave, to move to other satellite cities located farther away from Brasilia's Pilot Plan, or even forced to return to their homes. Lilian Magnavita, from the state of Bahia, who arrived in Brasilia in 1960, recalled how she witnessed the relocation of *candangos* who returned to their hometowns, since they lacked the proper financial and legal means to remain in the city or in its surrounding areas. Touched by the images of disillusionment, she wrote a poem that highlighted their plight and the racial and regional elements embedded in their identities as *candangos*:

Those *candangos*, I saw them arrive, carrying the burden of cruelty, driven  
by the forces of misery. These were men, women, and children; live

---

<sup>446</sup>Interviewed by Silva Regina Viola de Castro on 24 October, 2000. Citation: Pontes, Antonio de Paula. *Depoimento – Programa de Historia Oral*. Brasilia, Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal, 2000.

contrasts of fear and hope, tired, almost naked, carrying on their tanned skin the bloody marks [of servitude]. Where men fell soon crosses were raised, and in the distant horizon the voice of dawn was heard; it was Brasilia, a girl that grew under the beautiful blue dressings of the unending sky, showing her bright and hopeful face to the poor *sertanejo* that weeped (...) tears of joy for the conquest of the daily bread. The *nordestino*, brave and strong, became *candango* (...) built here the symbol of faith: Brasilia the girl, Brasilia the woman. Later, I saw them leave, they were dirty, broken, emaciated, on their faces nothing was left of their previous hopeful selves, nothing. They were mythical shadows, loose particles (...) this, ladies and gentlemen, is the other face of Brasilia, drowned in the shadow of misery.<sup>447</sup>

Underneath this excerpt's marked poetic discourse, elements of regional identity and racial stock are made clear. Magnavita's poem highlighted the daunting realization that many families were considered unworthy to be permanent residents of Brasilia, and thus had to return to their place of origin as a displaced population.

The focus of the successful squatter organizations on solely gaining legal residency rights is a common trend in Brazilian urban organization.<sup>448</sup> This was a pattern that had previously occurred in Rio de Janeiro. Usually the government first confronted the mobilizers, and then had to negotiate with them. In the specific case of Brasilia, negotiations seemed to solve the problem and kept the surplus population from having to leave the city.

---

<sup>447</sup>Cited in Mourao, Tania Fontenele; Oliveira, Monica Ferreira Gaspar *Poeira e Batom no Planalto Central: 50 Mulheres na Construcao de Brasilia*. Petrobras, 2010., p. 61.

<sup>448</sup>Curtis, James R. "Praças, Place, and Public Life in Urban Brazil" *Geographical Review*, Vol. 90, No. 4 (Oct., 2000), pp.475-492.

Squatters received legal residence, but were relegated to the marginalized outskirts of the city. Furthermore, the creation of local prefectures and governing bodies ultimately allowed for an administrative separation between the idealized new capital and the unplanned periphery.<sup>449</sup>

The history of Brasilia's first social movements adequately fits Diane Davis' analysis of mobilization, which discusses the defining elements of social distances from central state authority being mainly geography, institutional organization, class considerations, and culture. Geographic distance, for example, is perhaps the most obvious explanation for either political inclusion or detachment, since as Davis says, "social movements in large or capital cities (in Latin America) have symbolic and substantive access to the state in ways that can affect citizen strategies of engagement as well as how the state responds."<sup>450</sup> This was certainly true in most cases of *candangos*' demands for residential legalization which happened, in general, under relatively peaceful conditions and within a faster timeframe.<sup>451</sup> Furthermore, within what Davis considered a "distance continuum" one finds social movements such as neighborhood organizations in large Latin American cities, which benefit from a relative proximity to the state and use this advantage in their quest to demand rights. This was notably the case of the housing movement of the Free City, where residents leveraged their geographic proximity to the capital's political center, and their financial power to help win their case.

---

<sup>449</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City an Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. The University of Chicago Press, 1989.

<sup>450</sup> Davis, Diane E. "The Power of Distance: Re-theorizing Social Movements in Latin America" In *Theory and Society*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Aug, 1999) p.603.

<sup>451</sup>The construction of Taguatinga, for instance, happened in only two months since the government was interested in quickly relocating its unwanted population from the Vila Sarah Kubitschek to a more distant settlement.

Davis has also stated that “one reason social movements are so pervasive in Latin America is because the structures of the state are so closed, and because considerable numbers of Latin American citizens are distanced from the formal institutions of governance.”<sup>452</sup> That perspective helps explain why so many *candangos*, usually defined as the poor and marginalized *nordestino*, readily embraced the identity of builders of the new capital. This new identity became a viable way, at least symbolic, for them to gain a small sense of power and relevance, integrating Brazilian society and state, and helps explain why so many still embrace the illusion of Brasilia as a democratic frontier.

The history of other citizen movements in Brasilia, such as the example of the *Vila Matias*, reflects another suggestion by Davis, that “under certain conditions, perhaps during severe political crisis, states will, for legitimacy reasons, also want to ignore established constituencies and respond to the more estranged citizens, not only those who are distanced institutionally but also those whose distance is evident on the basis of class or other cultural identities.”<sup>453</sup> In this sense, since most of the *Vila's* inhabitants were construction workers from the lower social classes and, many, from the Northeast, they represented a category separate from that which encompassed the Free City dwellers. Thanks to their economic status, Free City entrepreneurs represented a group that, through commercial and political ties, was closer to the state and thus could lobby the government to gain social mobilization. The case of *Vila Matias*, as with the foundation of *Taguatinga*, represented instead a social movement that began as somewhat detached from the central state authority and “more estranged” from power, but that ultimately pushed government to concede and grant it land

---

<sup>452</sup>Davis, Diane E. “The Power of Distance: Re-theorizing Social Movements in Latin America” In *Theory and Society*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Aug,1999), p.622.

<sup>453</sup>Ibid. p.626.

rights, due to the undesirable negative effects of having illegal squatters visible along Brasilia's main roads.

Lastly, despite the creation of satellite cities, government leaders wanted to further separate the planned city from its undesired, yet inevitable, surroundings. They accomplished this through techniques of status differentiation based on residential laws that determined that the *candangos*, or “low-brow” construction workers, could inhabit Brasilia's outskirts; but that the capital's central locations were reserved for official civil servants and employees of state bureaucracy. César Najar Fernandez, an engineer who arrived in Brasilia in 1959 and participated in the Free City residents' fixation campaign, posed the key question: “are they [residents of different settlements and areas in Brasilia] Brazilians of different categories?”<sup>454</sup> This separation between different sets of residents was based not on economic nor on class differences directly, but on titles and functional ranks. That distinction both reflected and consolidated the engendered identities that constituted Brasilia's social structure. At the heart of such disputed inequalities is the issue of people's self-identification as either a *candango* or *pioneer*; the first term referring to the unwanted masses, or “acquired Brazil” as Holston described, and the latter reflecting the nationalist idealism attached to Brazil's modern heroes and enablers of the capital's relocation.

---

<sup>454</sup>Interviewed by Silvia Regina Viola de Castro and Viviane Irene Fonseca Dornas in October, 1999. Citation: Fernandez, Cesar Najar. *Depoimento – Programa de Historia Oral*. Brasilia, Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal, 2000. Projeto Nucleo Bandeirantes.



### **Malleable Identities: *Candangos* or *Pioneiros*?**

It is the “acquired Brazil”, the self-images of racially diverse laborers from several states, different social and cultural backgrounds, that illustrates the complex tensions of people’s lives within the new environment of this rapidly-constructed capital city. The stories told by the true builders of Brasilia are tales of heroism, suffering, mythology, and conquest in the frontier space; but are also stories of rejection, violence, racial and social prejudice, and ultimately frustration. Those men and women who migrated to Brasilia during its construction became known by the terms *candango*<sup>455</sup> or *pioneiro*,<sup>456</sup> terms that were interchangeable depending on the particular interests of the political discourse at the time, and that, sadly, carried different social values. While the first generally had a derogatory essence of referring to the low-brow construction worker, the latter referred to the higher ranking engineers, civil servants, or to the small Free City entrepreneur.

The actual stratification within the frontier society that existed during Brasilia’s construction years is evident when analyzing the origins and malleability of the terms *candangos*, and *pioneiros*. Originally used in Africa as reference to Portuguese colonizers, the term *candango* was a derivation of the African word *candongo*, used among tribes from the region of present-day Angola. The term arrived in Brazil through the Atlantic slave trade, and first appeared on the northeastern sugar cane plantations.<sup>457</sup> Gradually, its meaning shifted into a synonym of *cafuzo*, perhaps first used by Portuguese planters that did not understand the term’s correct meaning, and soon became the general name of the inhabitants of the region’s interior, meaning the *sertanejos*.

<sup>455</sup>Tamanini, L. *Brasília : memória da construção*. 2nd ed. Brasília DF: Projecto Editorial, 2003.

<sup>456</sup>Translated to *pioneer*.

<sup>457</sup>Tamanini, L. *Brasília : memória da construção*. 2nd ed. Brasília DF: Projecto Editorial, 2003.

This connection is comprehensible through the examination of the racial constitution of the *nordestino*, precisely the *sertanejos*, as seen in Stanley E. Blake's book.<sup>458</sup> According to him, these people's racial origins reflected, in general, the racial miscegenation between *negros* and *indios*, thus generating the *cafuzos*. Therefore, since the *sertanejo* was normally the itinerant and poor agricultural worker who often left the Northeast in search of better work conditions the term, with its racial implications, arrived in Brasilia along with the *nordestino* worker.<sup>459</sup> The racial element behind the term *candango* appears in comments by residents of Brasilia themselves in later years. Therezinha Rodrigues, who remembers viewing the construction workers and the *nordestino* as similar products of racial miscegenation, said, "...I saw the candangos...later when I visited the Northeast I was amazed, because they were mixed, right? The indigenous, the negro, the white, those we study, but (then) I was seeing them right there (mixed)."<sup>460</sup>

---

<sup>458</sup>Blake, Stanley E. *The Vigorous Core of Our Nationality: Race and Regional Identity in Northeastern Brazil*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011.

<sup>459</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City an Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. The University of Chicago Press, 1989.

<sup>460</sup>Cited in Mourao, Tania Fontenele; Oliveira, Monica Ferreira Gaspar *Poeira e Batom no Planalto Central: 50 Mulheres na Construcao de Brasilia*. Petrobras, 2010., p. 23.



**Figure 7.** Construction workers, or *candangos*. Mario Fontenelle. Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal.

During the years of the capital's construction, the term *candango* initially gained a positive connotation throughout Kubitschek's recruitment campaign, which portrayed those men, especially from the Northeast, as the valiant nation-builders. In a speech on January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1960, the president said:

Future interpreters of Brazilian civilization, in analyzing this period of our history, must dwell with astonishment before the bronzed figure of this anonymous titan, who is the *candango*, the obscure and formidable hero of the construction of Brasilia...the *candangos* shouldered the responsibility of ...working day and night to accomplish, in my administration, the letter of the Constitution...The sad appearance of a dejected invalid, with which Euclides da Cunha portrayed our *sertanejo*, is fading out of the Brazilian

panorama. You will not find it in the fellow of the *candango*, to whom we owe this city.<sup>461</sup>

As those comments illustrate, Kubitschek envisioned the nation-builder as a *sertanejo*, an image that complemented the government's plan of integrating, if only symbolically, a formerly excluded population into his nationalist program. His comments highlight the development of Brazil's *nordestino* identity in the 1950s and 1960s, which painted the *sertanejos* as brave survivors of Brazil's destitute and arid region, and signaled that they were the respectable "builders" of the new capital, although they were not its expected "inhabitants." By rhetorically transforming them into national heroes, Kubitschek helped popularize the image of *nordestinos*, the quintessential Brazilians, as a resilient, courageous, and patriotic lot without promising them permanent residence in Brazil's modernist city. Again, residents themselves picked up on that imagery of heroism. Hilda Silva, who arrived in Brasilia in 1959, straight from the *Nordeste*, later commented:

...Because Brasilia was made by *nordestinos*. The role of the *nordestino* was amazing. Just by entering the backlands and building with our own hands...the technology was *nordestino* hands. I am very proud of being *nordestina*, because I helped build Brasilia.<sup>462</sup>

Once this valued connotation of heroism appeared some of the workers whether poor construction laborers or upper-level technocrats embraced the term *candango*. Interestingly, those directly employed in the construction work as low-class workers were only allowed

<sup>461</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City an Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. The University of Chicago Press, 1989, pp.210-211.

<sup>462</sup>Mourão, Tania Fontenele; Oliveira, Monica Ferreira Gaspar *Poeira e Batom no Planalto Central: 50 Mulheres na Construção de Brasília*. Petrobras, 2010., p.23.

the identity of *candango* while others, even if from the same social and financial background as the manual laborers but working in other occupations were entitled to use either the same term or intersperse it with that of *pioneiro*, or “pioneer.” However, in 1959, with the city’s inauguration drawing near, and the final realization that the government did not intend to grant migrants rights to the city the term *candango* once again became increasingly derogatory. This was a social construct derived from the legitimization process that inhabitants of the Free City and of surrounding areas underwent.

In the specific case of the Free City, their attempts to negotiate with the government for legal rights to remain in their settlement included the verbal detachment from the group of construction workers, in order to create a hierarchical scale that might justify the class of commercial owners’ claims. In embracing the term *pioneiro* over that of *candango*, they attempted to legitimize their demands for rightful access to the new city, through positive inferences. In this particular case, the fact that legitimization came through the acts and political pressure of a commercial association, the ACB, reflects the classist element behind the struggle for formal recognition. Underlining the ACB’s demands was the subconscious understanding that the Free City’s inhabitants belonged to a category different from that of the regular construction worker, one that carried with it traditional implications of social and racial discrimination. This is seen in the comment of Palmerinda Donato, a member of Brazil’s upper class who moved to Brasilia from Rio de Janeiro in 1957 to help both Kubitschek and his wife Sarah gain supporters from Rio for his goal of relocating the capital:

*Candango* meant a bad thing... (men) working in the brutal construction work, working with cement, dirt, shovel, those were the *candangos*...it has a bad meaning, and became the common name for the *candangos*, those that came to Brasilia to do heavy labor. *Pioneiros* are the first men that came, such as Oscar Niemeyer, Lucio Costa, Athos Bulcao<sup>463</sup>...we are all pioneers. I consider myself a pioneer...<sup>464</sup>

After Brasilia's inauguration in 1960, the government speeded up the transfer of state bureaucratic entities from Rio de Janeiro to the new capital, a process that accelerated the re-emergence of social and racial prejudices. Post-inauguration language further distanced the derogatory *candango* from the heroic *pioneiro*. Officially, in the 1960s, a new term was coined to represent those either born in Brasilia, or who held seemingly-legitimate claims to the city due to their social status: *Brasiliense*. In the 1980s, as Holston describes, members of Brasilia's upper classes generally refused to consider themselves as *candangos*. But inhabitants of the satellite cities that arose in the areas around the capital's Pilot Plan, mostly lower-class men and women, embraced the term, as it acquired new meaning in the 1980s to represent a pioneer with adventurous spirit.<sup>465</sup> Helena Carvalho arrived in Brasilia in 1959, having traveled with her husband from Rio de Janeiro through the country's interior on a jeep, and she regarded the trip as just the beginning of a new adventure. Her joy in the term *candango* illustrates how she came to see it as synonymous to adventurous, brave, and

---

<sup>463</sup>Architects involved in the creation of Brasilia, and representatives of the upper echelons of government, and technical classes.

<sup>464</sup>Cited in Mourão, Tania Fontenele; Oliveira, Monica Ferreira Gaspar *Poeira e Batom no Planalto Central: 50 Mulheres na Construção de Brasília*. Petrobras, 2010., p.45.

<sup>465</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City an Anthropological Critique of Brasília*. The University of Chicago Press, 1989.

heroic. In her interview she remembered how, throughout the years, she claimed for herself the identity of an audacious, carefree *candanga*<sup>466</sup>:

The *candango*, for many people, was a derogatory adjective. I don't think so. I think that Juscelino was a *candango*, my husband was a *candango*, I was a *candango*. I am very proud of being *candango*. I think that the *candango* is the person that arrived here with the right spirit. *Pioneiro* is a (product) of an epoch, *candango* is a state of spirit. He arrived, loves Brasilia and loves what Brasilia became. That is the true *candango*. The person that carries Brasilia's dirt in his veins...<sup>467</sup>

Brazilian language, with various connotations of class, race, and geography, has continued to evolve since the publication of Holston's 1989 book. After Brasilia celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 2010, the word *candango* gained greater significance among today's members of the Pilot Plan's middle class. To commemorate the special date, the city organized several exhibitions, including the exhibit titled *Poeira e Batom*, or "Dust and Lipstick." The organizer, Tania Fontenele, a representative of the urban middle class, sought to demonstrate the valor of the *candango*, especially the pioneering women who came to Brasilia during its construction years. In the book that accompanied the exhibit,<sup>468</sup> Fontenele wrote about her desire to restore the heroic value of the first inhabitants of the city. The quest for this sense of heroism and purpose currently attracts a greater number of

---

<sup>466</sup>Refers to the female version of *candango*.

<sup>467</sup>Cited in Mourao, Tania Fontenele; Oliveira, Monica Ferreira Gaspar *Poeira e Batom no Planalto Central: 50 Mulheres na Construção de Brasília*. Petrobras, 2010. p.45.

<sup>468</sup>Mourao, Tania Fontenele; Oliveira, Monica Ferreira Gaspar *Poeira e Batom no Planalto Central: 50 Mulheres na Construção de Brasília*. Petrobras, 2010..

members of Brasilia's middle class to the *candango* identity, although the city's upper social elite still prefers the category of *Brasiliense*.

This greater acceptance of the term *candango* reflects the outcome of the early 1960s conflict that arose in Brasilia between the newly arrived bureaucrats from Rio de Janeiro, and the residing officials, technocrats, and engineers who had built the capital and remained after its inauguration, as Holston describes. The new political class who only came to the city post-inauguration claimed for itself the term *pioneiro*. That choice of language led lower government officials to the sad realization that their important function during construction was being replaced by the growing body of politicians who viewed the city as their work space, not as their actual home. Thus, according to Holston, in a sarcastic adaptation of the identity of "pioneer", the middle-class officials and construction workers who had built Brasilia and remained after inauguration used the term *pioneiro* when referring to the upper bureaucrats, but referred to themselves and their cohorts as *piotarios*, a mixture of *pioneiros*, 'pioneers', and *otarios*, 'suckers'.<sup>469</sup>

This derogatory terminology appeared in the memories of Delcides Abadia, whose family lived and worked in an agricultural community close to the city. When they arrived at the site of the future capital, the only place his father could afford to set up housing for the family was under a makeshift tent propped against a tree in an area surrounding the Free City. His family was one of the few that was granted legitimate access to the city post-inauguration, and in his testimony, Abadia mentioned an incident that occurred after the capital's inauguration. Working for a State Representative, he was asked by his boss to do

---

<sup>469</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City an Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. The University of Chicago Press, 1989, p. 217.



something that he considered unethical. After Abadia refused, the politician answered “You are really a *piotario*.” Unaware of the terminology, the employee asked what it meant, and heard the following explanation: “It means the sucker pioneer that still works for others. I mean, you are honest, you are good enough to work for me, but because of it you are also a sucker.”<sup>470</sup> That dialogue illustrated the subconscious classification that reflected the social separation between the two men. The politician, representing the upper class that felt it had rightful claims to the new capital, mocked his lower-class employee, one of the many who had dutifully worked in the city’s construction, but resigned to an inferior position after the capital’s inauguration.

Spatially, while the new upper-class arrivals inhabited the coveted center of Brasilia’s Pilot Plan, the lower-status old residents were pushed to the outskirts of the city, and were expected to happily accept indirect access to it. This post-inaugural tension may have led the middle and lower classes to embrace, and reconstitute, the term *candango* with a sense of heroic nationalism. Regardless of terminology, the significance of these experiences lies in the reminder that Brasilia was built by a diverse work force, with men and women from different regions who migrated to the new city in search of a better life. With increasing social division, Brasilia witnessed violent outbreaks, often common in frontier spaces. Some episodes predictably reflected the normal cycles of human settlement and relationships. Other incidents represented institutionalized, often subconscious, prejudice that manifested itself in outbursts of collective violence.

### Violence in the City

---

<sup>470</sup>Interviewed by Vania Lucia Alheiro Rosa and Vera Lucia Pereira Duarte. Information for citation: Silva, Delcides Abadia. *Depoimento – Programa de Historia Oral*. Brasilia, Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal, 1990.

Roberta Senechal de la Roche, writing about collective violence in 1996,<sup>471</sup> described it as a mechanism of social control normally implemented or executed in reaction to a behavior considered deviant or illegal. In her words, “deviant behavior is not merely conduct an outside observer might regard as illegal, but any action that... is subject to social control. Collective violence, then, is a moralistic response to deviant behavior.” Earlier in the twentieth century, sociologists considered collective violence to be a hysterical manifestation of mass reaction. However, in contemporary analysis, scholars have interpreted it as any form of protest that occurs violently, carried out by a group of individuals with legal, or illegal, justification. This new definition also encompasses what Blomley has called law-preserving violence, or law-making violence. “Law-preserving violence” means an episode that usually occurs in response to a law-breaking threat, and is often legitimized in its outcome. By contrast, “law-making violence” is aimed at transforming the status quo, even if it means through violent reactions.<sup>472</sup> While generally rare in the case of Brasilia's social structure and formation, a few episodes of collective violence appeared during the late 1950s and afterwards. Some cases represented *candangos*' resistance to imposed eviction, but the Fernandes Pacheco massacre of 1959 represented a different set of social, psychological, and political circumstances.

During its early construction phase, Brasilia displayed most of the characteristics of frontier cities. It lacked a federal police force, had a high male to female ratio, and lacked infrastructure. As construction work progressed, laborers under stress from the fast pace and long hours needed social outlets. Construction laborers who were not working on weekend

<sup>471</sup>Roche, Roberta Senechal de la. “Collective Violence as Social Control” in *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 11 No. 1 (Mar.1996), pp.97-128.

<sup>472</sup>Blomley, Nicholas. “Law, Property, and the Geography of Violence: The Frontier, the Survey, and the Grid” in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 93, No.1 (Mar. 2003). pp. 121-141.

shifts usually gathered around a car or met in a bar, attracted by radio music and alcoholic beverages. Their informal gatherings often ended in violent outbreaks. Among these initially peaceful congregations, alcohol consumption often triggered arguments over women or sports.

Still, some early inhabitants of Brasilia remember it as a relatively safe and peaceful setting, as Edson Porto, a physician from Goias who moved to Brasilia to work on emergency care of the construction workers, remembered:

No one locked their doors. There was no stealing. I believe it was so because people were employed, earned a good living, had their things, sent money to their families in the Northeast...the arguments that occurred were due to excessive drinking on a specific weekend, but it was very rare.<sup>473</sup>

Others, such as construction worker Carlito Alves Rodrigues, who arrived in the future capital from the northeastern state of Ceara in 1956, mentioned that Brasilia was a true frontier city and, as such, was also violent: "...people arrived, it was like a mining settlement, no one paid taxes, there were many deaths, many people died, everyone walked around with a gun..."<sup>474</sup>

The difference in these two men's testimonies is explained by their different social status and role in the construction of Brasilia. Normally engineers or workers such as Porto, who were directly employed by Novacap, remembered the construction years positively.

<sup>473</sup>Interviewed in April 2000, by Silvia Regina Viola de Castro and Clemia Lucas de Barros Teixeira. Citation: Porto, Edson. *Depoimento – Programa de Historia Oral*. Brasilia, Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal, 2000. Projeto Nucleo Bandeirantes.

<sup>474</sup>Interviewed in May 2000 by Viviane Irene Fonseca Dornas and Clemia Lucas de Barros Teixeira. Citation: Rodrigues, Carlito Alves. *Depoimento-Programa de Historia Oral*. Brasilia. Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal, 2000. Part of the *Projeto Nucleo Bandeirantes*.

Most lived in Novacap's lodgings or in houses set up for families. On the other hand, laborers like Rodrigues resided in the construction companies' camp sites, which were designated as living quarters for the construction workers that migrated alone to the city. Those camps were male-dominated spaces, more prone to violent clashes between individuals. Those violent confrontations fall under the category of *brigas*, or "fights", which historian Daniel Linger<sup>475</sup> defines as a structured social interaction that served the purpose of venting racial, class, and personal rivalries and frustration. Anthropologist Nancy Sheper-Hughes also examined violence as part of a Brazilian community's routine. In her book *Death without Weeping*, she argued that in the Brazilian imaginary, everyday life is described as a "struggle", or *luta*, *batalha*. This characterization is more intense than the popular American expression "daily grind" which denotes dullness, tiring, and/or repetitive work.<sup>476</sup> The Portuguese version incorporates a more violent approach and tense identity to an individual's job and routine activities, thus underlying a sense of intense confrontation and burden.

In practical terms, the word *brigas* signified "agonistic encounters, frequently fueled by alcohol or drugs, which often begin verbally but can end in death."<sup>477</sup> This was certainly the case of the first murder occurrence in Brasilia, described in the interview with Delcides Abadia.<sup>478</sup> In his testimony Abadia remembered that a man and the cook from the bar

---

<sup>475</sup>Linger, Daniel T. *Dangerous encounters: meanings of violence in a Brazilian city*. Stanford University Press, 1992.

<sup>476</sup>Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. *Death without weeping: the violence of everyday life in Brazil*. University of California Press, 1992.

<sup>477</sup>Lewis, J.Lowell."Sex and violence in Brazil: carnival, capoeira, and the problem of everyday life." In *American Ethnologist* Vol. 26, No. 3 (Aug.,1999) p.543.

<sup>478</sup>Interviewed by Vania Lucia Alheiro Rosa and Vera Lucia Pereira Duarte in September 1990. Citation: Silva, Delcides Abadia *Depoimento – Programa de Historia Oral*. Brasilia, Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal.

*Maracangalha*, located in the Free City, got into a fight that culminated in the cook stabbing the customer to death.

In taking a closer look at police reports from 1957 to 1959, my work has uncovered a small number of assassinations, an estimated total of four registered offenses. In addition to this, Brasilia police recorded a high incidence of complaints and imprisoned many people on charges of drunkenness, sexual harassment,<sup>479</sup> and disorderly behavior. Most of the registered cases involved inebriated men. Although most offenders were construction workers, accusations were also often leveled at higher-ranking officials such as engineers and administrative personnel. More than that, the police reports pertaining to Brasilia's early construction years suggest that Linger was correct in his interpretation of *brigas*, alcohol, and sex as social outlets of frustration and anger. The history of crime in early Brasilia reflects gender roles within the expected framework of a frontier space, a construction zone overrun by men of different social, cultural, and racial backgrounds living and working in harsh conditions.<sup>480</sup>

Attempting to limit violence in the city, the government issued local laws in 1957, forbidding the private ownership of weapons, and the abusive public consumption of alcohol. To reinforce those rules, and to maintain order especially around the camp and construction sites, Brasilia created a local police force, the *Guarda Especial de Brasilia*, or GEB. The policemen were chosen from a voluntary corps of workers and received no special federal police training. Their only required skill was to know how to shoot, and the

---

<sup>479</sup> Attempted and executed crimes against women will be discussed in the next chapter under the category of "gender."

<sup>480</sup> Linger, Daniel T. *Dangerous encounters: meanings of violence in a Brazilian city*. Stanford University Press, 1992.

desire to reinforce order and law when necessary. Not surprisingly, the GEB was known for its ruthlessness and for its efficient imposition of order.

On February 1959, during the festivities of *carnaval*, a violent clash between the GEB police force and construction workers erupted, which became known as the Pacheco Fernandes incident. *Candangos* and *pioneiros* still passionately debate the details of exactly what happened, while government officials dismiss it as a legend, or an urban exaggeration. Pacheco Fernandes was one of the many construction companies that operated in Brasilia and established camping sites and living quarters for its workers. Its responsibilities included offering its workers lodging and food at no cost or for a minimal fee. However, workers constantly complained that the quality of the food was far from acceptable or ideal. This complaint was not limited to Pacheco Fernandes; employees at most of the construction companies protested and even went on strike to demand improvement of the provided services. Clementino Candido, a worker at another company, Rabello, witnessed finding nail clippings, dead animals, stones and even Band-Aids in the workers' food. At Pacheco Fernandes, on February 8th, 1959, three iron workers received their meals and, dissatisfied with what they found, began rioting and demanding better service. What was really surprising and unique about the protest was what followed. Although there is not enough evidence to prove the sequence of events, most *candangos* interviewed remembered the story along the following lines, described in the account by Eronildes Guerra de Queiroz.<sup>481</sup>

Queiroz, a *nordestino* from Pernambuco who had arrived in Brasilia in 1957, was employed as one of the cooks on the Pacheco Fernandes' payroll. He recalled seeing three

---

<sup>481</sup>Eronildes Guerra de Queiroz was interviewed by Marli Guedes da Costa and Vera Lucia Pereira Duarte on December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1991. Citation: Queiroz, Eronildes Guerra de. *Depoimento – Programa de História Oral*. Brasilia, Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal, 1991.

rioting men break chairs and tables, and remembered how they were taken to jail by a company security guard. Following the arrest, a larger group of men stormed into the kitchen, claiming that the company security guard had treated their colleagues unfairly, demanding the prisoners' release, and complaining about the bad food conditions. Simultaneously, news of the outbreak and an alleged assassination of a police officer reached the GEB headquarters, and soon the Guard's contingent was on its way to the Pacheco Fernandes' dining area and camp sites.

According to his testimony Queiroz allegedly watched the event unfold from within one of the storage rooms located inside the company's kitchen. Soon after the riot was controlled, GEB officers stormed the room and ordered those that still had not dispersed to stand in a single line in order to receive appropriate punishment. Many workers, scared of what could happen, decided to run, which in Queiroz's account, led the police to fire some initial shots. After the first guard members started shooting, other officers followed suit. They shot the men who had tried to get away, and also those who had simply ducked, what Queiroz remembered as a line of cowering, fearful construction workers trying to protect themselves. His account asserted that some guards followed fleeing workers into the lodging area and randomly opened fire. Some men died sleeping in their bunk beds, while others died trying to escape, their limp bodies hanging from the barbed-wire fence that separated the camp site from other companies and zones. Queiroz further described the escalation of violence, remembering that "they [officers] invaded the camps and ordered workers to get up. If they took too long or answered back they were shot and killed." Considering himself lucky, he only escaped because he hid in the kitchen, but from his

hiding point, he saw dead and dying men dragged by officers, and heard the loud explosions of the gunfire rounds. Eventually, the company administration contacted higher authorities, who summoned a small army contingent to reestablish order in the future capital.

The aftermath of the massacre is difficult to measure, since a lot is based on rumors and mere interviews. Many Brazilians believed that the army and leaders of the GEB collected the bodies and dumped them in surrounding lakes and rivers, thus erasing physical proof of the massacre and avoiding negative press reports that would hamper progression of Brasilia's construction. Queiroz suggested that authorities offered a man named Manoel, who worked as a truck driver for Pacheco Fernandes, a new Ford F-600 in exchange for his participation in the cover-up and silence about the incident. Allegedly Manoel, accepting the trade-off, drove loads of dead bodies to the lakes of *Lagoa Feia* and *Lagoa Formosa*,<sup>482</sup> thus helping the company, and the government, conceal the abuse. Queiroz ended his testimony by mentioning a secret conversation he had with an army officer, Sargent Pinto, in which he asked how many men were officially killed. Pinto allegedly replied, "...we can't talk about it...they'll kill us. But I'll say that there are many leftover luggage lying around the campsites."<sup>483</sup>

Queiroz's testimony matched the general description of the event given by Clementino Candido who, although he did not actually see any of the shooting, was at the nearby campsite of the Rabello company and remembered hearing the shots and commotion. Candido also confirmed that there was a governmental cover-up campaign, but he insisted

---

<sup>482</sup>Two natural lakes located within the state of Goias. Their names can be translated to Ugly Lake and Beautiful Lake, respectively.

<sup>483</sup>Eronildes Guerra de Queiroz was interviewed by Marli Guedes da Costa and Vera Lucia Pereira Duarte on December 10<sup>th</sup>, 1991. Citation: Queiroz, Eronildes Guerra de. *Depoimento – Programa de Hl storia Oral*. Brasilia, Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal, 1991. P.6.



that President Kubitschek was probably unaware of the severity of the incident, thus placing the burden of guilt entirely on the local administration.<sup>484</sup> After the riot, more than two thousand workers quit Pacheco Fernandes, transferring to other companies. Lucio Arantes, who migrated to Brasilia from Goiania, in the state of Goias, in 1956, to work as a legal assistant to settle minor legal issues between workers and companies also remembered the event. In his 1989 interview he mentioned that “one night there was a fight [in the Pacheco Fernandes camp] and the GEB was summoned to end it, however in the midst of all the commotion the [police force] opened fire and killed many people.”<sup>485</sup>

Most of the men and women who were interviewed by the staff of the Public Archives of the Federal District, such as Queiroz, Candido, and Arantes, agreed that while the violence was extreme, the national repercussions of the incident were limited, partially because most of the victims were from poor families in the Northeast who probably had no idea where to start looking for their missed loved ones. Furthermore, since many of the *candangos* were men, some observers assumed that the missing murder victims had simply abandoned their previous lives for a possible second wife and family.

Publicly, the incident received little attention in the national media, and accounts that were published offered mainly confused and vague interpretations. One of the first articles was from the periodical *Ultima Hora*, on February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1959, four days after the incident. The short text said that guards had invaded the company’s housing area, but that only one

---

<sup>484</sup>Interviewed by Ana Claudia Correa Brandao Gracindo and Marli Guedes da Costa on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 1990. Citation: Candido, Clementino. *Depoimento – Programa de HHistoria Oral*. Brasilia, Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal, 1990.

<sup>485</sup>Interviewed by Carlos Henrique Ferreira de Araujo. Citation: Arantes, Lucio Batista. *Depoimento – Programa de HHistoria Oral*. Brasilia, Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal, 1989. P. 13.

worker was killed.<sup>486</sup> The following day, the newspaper *Tribuna da Imprensa* asserted that workers had been murdered in their sleep by officers who gunned them down through walls. The article ended by mentioning that the body count was up to nine.<sup>487</sup> That same day, *O Estado de Minas* called the event a true massacre, with one dead worker and sixty-nine injured men, but attributed the violent outbreak to a different reason.<sup>488</sup> According to that article, a fight broke out between two laborers and after officers were called to break up the fight, other workers surrounded and threatened the police corps. Fearful, the officers called for back-up, and two trucks carrying police officers quickly made their way to the camp site. Attacked by workers carrying shovels and bats, the guard opened fire, but only killed one worker.

Another media report, from *Jornal do Comércio*, published on February 13<sup>th</sup>, 1959, deserves special consideration. The headline read, “shooting causes death and injury in the new capital.” That report repeated the government’s official version of the episode, which was essentially that police officers, when trying to break up a fight between two workers, faced violent resistance and thus had to shoot one man. However, the editorial also mentioned an initial telegram that announced that police officers had gunned down unarmed workers, including sleeping men, and that nine men were killed.

Ironically, the fact that there were two contradictory accounts being publicized did not raise further questions and investigations. Moreover, days before the incident was

---

<sup>486</sup>Clipping of article in *Ultima Hora*, February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1959. Public Archives of the Federal District. (Arquivo Publico do GDF).

<sup>487</sup>Clipping of article in *Tribuna da Imprensa*, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 1959. Public Archives of the Federal District. (Arquivo Publico do GDF).

<sup>488</sup>Clipping of article in *O Estado de Minas*, February 14<sup>th</sup>, 1959. Public Archives of the Federal District. (Arquivo Publico do GDF).

eventually notified by the media, meaning on February 9<sup>th</sup> local government agents in the state of Goiás received a telegram directly from Brasília stating that a shooting had occurred and also asking for Goiás authorities' discretion when releasing the information to the public. However, little attention was given to the fact that a violent outbreak happened in Brasília, and that authorities were notified immediately after it occurred, although they tried to keep the information from gaining greater importance in the media. This later further fueled claims of a government cover-up operation. A small paragraph in the same edition also suggested that the conflict had originated with a protest against the bad conditions of the food served in the company's dining area, and ended on a short note that workers were formally going on strike to show their contempt and anger against the local police force.<sup>489</sup> The newspaper *O Globo* also mentioned that Free City traders had organized a strike demanding the replacement of the GEB, and quoted the words of the Commercial Association's president: "We don't have policemen, but instead we have criminals wearing uniforms...we need the army instead."<sup>490</sup>

While these various media accounts clearly contradicted each other in different reports about the cause of the outburst, the course of violence, and the exact death toll, they did not elicit any type of national reaction. There was no public demand for justice or investigation. That lack of outrage reflected the middle and upper classes' disconnect from the lower social groups represented by the *candangos*. More than that, it seemingly confirmed the *candangos*' theory that authorities had succeeded in mounting a cover-up,

---

<sup>489</sup>Clipping of article in *Jornal do Comercio*, February 13<sup>th</sup>, 1959. Public Archives of the Federal District. (Arquivo Publico do GDF).

<sup>490</sup>Newspaper article from *O Globo*, February 14<sup>th</sup>, 1959. Public Archives of the Federal District.

preventing any scandal from delaying the pace of construction and setting back the schedule for the capital's inauguration the following year.

Reexamining this history, a 2010 book by Tania Fontenele Mourão<sup>491</sup> looked at statements from the men and women who participated in the capital's construction, rather than official reports. Mourão concluded that tensions between workers and authorities in Brasilia were already running high before the actual confrontation. Mourão reported that on February 7<sup>th</sup>, 1959, one day before the Pacheco Fernandes massacre, the GEB forces shut down the camps' water supply. February is traditionally the month of *carnaval*<sup>492</sup> in Brazil, a time when workers expected that companies would reduce their work load and slow the construction pace, to give employees a chance to celebrate the national festivities. However, Novacap pressured camp managers to keep up the fast-paced building schedule in order to meet the inauguration deadline. The authorities authorized the cut-down of the camp water supply because, as some of the *candangos* later emphasized, they knew that no worker dared visit the prostitution zone without showering first. Men covered in dirt and dust needed to bathe at sundown before attending social gatherings. Mourão claimed that by limiting their water supply, the GEB was attempting to prevent workers from socializing and force them to keep construction going despite the holiday.

Mourão also lamented the incredible disparity between the official police report, which stated that only one worker had been killed, and merely three injured, and the many eyewitness accounts that placed those numbers between twenty and one hundred. Mourão

---

<sup>491</sup>Mourão, Tania Fontenele; Oliveira, Monica Ferreira Gaspar *Poeira e Batom no Planalto Central: 50 Mulheres na Construção de Brasília*. Petrobras, 2010.

<sup>492</sup>*Carnaval*, or carnival, is a religion-based celebration that precedes Lent and that is an important cultural manifestation in Brazil. For more on the origins and symbolism of *carnaval* see: DaMatta, Roberto. *Carnival, Rogues, and Heroes: An Interpretation of the Brazilian Dilemma*. University of Notre Dame Press, 1991.

suggested that the episode failed to make major national news headlines since it happened during *carnaval*, a period when most of Brazilian society and media were distracted by coverage of the many state celebrations. She also cited the work of Brazilian anthropologist Gustavo Lins Ribeiro who, after extensive research, created the following description of the incident:

Carnival. Workers (three maximum) arrive in the dining area from work and found no more food available. They are only served left-overs. Irritated, one (or both) throws a plate against the cook (or manager). Other workers relate. Someone (unknown) calls the police force. The officers sent are outnumbered, but try to take the rioting workers to jail. Other laborers step in to prevent this, and a huge contingent of armed officers arrives. Shooting ensues. The police force asks no questions, just fire away at workers and into the camp's dwellings. Many were killed. Many died in their beds. Others were awakened violently and placed in a single line where they were beaten and humiliated. No one knows for sure how many were killed, whether twenty, forty, eighty or one hundred and forty. The dead are transported in trucks to a ditch in the middle of the *cerrado*. There is no official notification of what really happened. It was rough in Brasilia.<sup>493</sup>

The lack of extensive government report on the incident, and the fact that the Brazilian media did not publish the first coverage until four days after the conflict, suggests

<sup>493</sup>Cited in Mourão, Tania Fontenele; Oliveira, Monica Ferreira Gaspar *Poeira e Batom no Planalto Central: 50 Mulheres na Construção de Brasília*. Petrobras, 2010, p.29.

legal negligence and may lend some credibility to theories that the state was willing to tamper with proof or cover up horrifying details. Scholars and Brazilians alike have come to believe that there was definitely more than one death, but to this day, the government and media seem to show little interest in uncovering the truth. Currently, access to files pertaining to the topic is limited and thwarted by a mountain-load of bureaucratic measures, including a requirement for legal authorizations from victims' and officers' families. These rules of the Public Archives of the Federal District, operating under governmental law, have effectively hindered researchers from fully comprehending the sequence of events, and the magnitude of the GEB's actions. But although information remains shielded from open public access, many Brazilians familiar with the account, most hailing from Brasilia, today consider the story of the Pacheco Fernandes massacre to be a symbol of government oppression of the *candango*, the claimed true builders of Brasilia. Thus, the story of Brasilia's construction is more complicated than the use of national propaganda to promote a sense of accomplishment, and a strong belief in the power of modernization. It also consists of political tensions, scandals, and the shedding of blood.

## CHAPTER 7. SHAPING GENDER ROLES IN BRASILIA

In 1957 we couldn't even step outside because men would grab us. During that time there were about three women in Brasilia. We would get together at night to go down to the river and do laundry, but we needed the help of a few men to accompany and guard us.

This excerpt from an interview cited in Gustavo Lins Ribeiro's book *O Capital da Esperança*,<sup>494</sup> reflects the harsh reality faced by women who migrated to Brasilia during its

---

<sup>494</sup>Ribeiro, Gustavo Lins. *O Capital da Esperança: A Experiencia dos Trabalhadores na Construção de Brasilia*. Editora UnB, 2008, p.106.

construction period. In spite of the clear exaggeration in numbers (specialists agree that there were more than three women, although the exact numbers are difficult to calculate) the statement unveils the rigors of life in a masculine frontier setting. These women faced the double challenge of finding physical and sexual protection, while carving out a space in a setting that openly benefitted male workers. To better understand the daily struggles of these pioneering women, we must first examine Brazilian society's traditional gender roles, its gradual transformations, and the many contradictory elements that permeated the scope of gender relations. Included in this discussion are topics such as sexuality, prostitution, and the traditional masculine right of exerting control over female family members, even if through violent measures. Finally, an evaluation of how sexuality and sexual honor were interpreted in Brazil during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries is paramount to a comprehensive study of gender relations in the frontier setting of Brasilia, especially when evaluating police reports and the testimonies of the men and women who migrated to Brazil's future capital.

Recent scholarship on gender relations and structure in Latin America focuses on three topics, masculinity, femininity, and sexual honor. Very broadly, interpretations have followed three main schools of thought.<sup>495</sup> The first argues that over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, members of the lower classes developed a separate set of moral values in which traditional priorities of virginity and female submission were less important. To support this argument, advocates of this line of reasoning point to rising numbers of illegitimate children and female-headed households among the lower class over the period from about 1900 to the 1980s.<sup>496</sup> A second group of scholars believe that the

<sup>495</sup>Tinsman, Heidi. "A Paradigm of Our Own: Joan Scott in Latin American History" In *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 113, No. 5 (December 2008), pp. 1344-1345.

<sup>496</sup>Caufield, Sueann. *In Defense of Honor. Sexual Morality, Modernity, and Nation in Early Twentieth-Century Brazil*. Duke University Press, 2000. Hahner, June E. *Emancipating the Female Sex: The Struggle for*



Catholic Church in Latin America and in Brazil, more specifically, was so influential that it succeeded in creating sets of family and sexual values that translated into a strict patriarchal family structure. However, social marginalization kept the lower classes from fully abiding by those norms, and pushed them further into a conflict between such prescribed behavior and what reality allowed them to do.<sup>497</sup> Finally, a third group argues that moral and sexual behaviors were not merely products of religious and moral expectations, but were also tools of further separating the different social classes. Often these three approaches overlap, and an examination of state, Church, and social roles in shaping gender hierarchy and relations provides a more complete picture of Brazil's complex society.<sup>498</sup>

### **Tradition and Modernity in Brazil's Gender Relations**

Until the mid-1800s, Brazilian society was shaped by strict ties of hierarchy and patronage. Elite women and children were taught to obey the male heads-of-households without questioning their decisions and customs. This meant that when it came to marriage, arrangements made by the father could not be challenged nor disregarded. On the other side of the social spectrum, lower class members seldom legally wed. Legal marriage was both a sign of status and a way of increasing and protecting wealth, and since poor families rarely had any property to protect or any means of acquiring new wealth through marriage, they opted for easier and accessible consensual unions, which could just as easily be dismantled. Because of this, illegitimacy rates increased during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and it was increasingly common to find women serving as heads of household. While the tradition of arranged marriages among the middle and upper classes waned in the early

---

*Women's Rights in Brazil, 1850–1940*. Duke University Press Books, 1993.

<sup>497</sup> Vainfas, Ronaldo. *Tropico dos Pecados: Moral, Sexualidade e Inquisicao no Brasil*. Editora Campus, 1989.

<sup>498</sup> Caufield, Sueann. *In Defense of Honor. Sexual Morality, Modernity, and Nation in Early Twentieth-Century Brazil*. Duke University Press, 2000.

1900s because of the country's general quest for modernity, the custom of consensual union and nontraditional amorous relationships within the lower class remained. In this context, the frequent lack of a committed and legally bound masculine breadwinner also meant that women had to work for a living, which many did as domestic servants, street vendors, and seamstresses, among other such occupations.<sup>499</sup>

By the late 1800s, Brazil's economic structure changed. Industrialization and the passing of the Golden Law in 1888 that abolished slavery accelerated those changes. To counter the end of slavery, the government sponsored the immigration of thousands of Europeans, many destined to work as underpaid laborers in Brazil's coffee plantations, and others in urban factories.<sup>500</sup> This shift in economic production altered social habits, and women, especially from the middle class, slowly went from being producers to being consumers. Following this trend, journalism enjoyed a significant boom, especially as Brazil's urban literate population increased. In 1890, only 19% of men and 10% of women knew how to read and write. In 1920, the numbers increased to 28.9% and 19.9% respectively. Within urban spaces in 1920, 54.5% of women residing in Brazil's major cities were literate, as were 65.8% of men.<sup>501</sup>

Catching up to this increase in literacy rates, in 1914 Brazilian publishers created a magazine designed entirely to meet women's intellectual and entertainment needs: the *Revista Feminina*.<sup>502</sup> Its founder, Virgilina de Souza Salles, a prominent business woman from Sao Paulo, called on women from prominent families to subscribe as a manifestation of

<sup>499</sup>Pinsky, Carla Bessanezi; Pedro, Joana Maria. *Nova Historia das Mulheres*. Editora Contexto, 2012.

<sup>500</sup>Fausto, Boris. *Historia do Brasil*. Editora da Universidade de São Paulo, 1994.

<sup>501</sup>Besse, Susan K. *Restructuring Patriarchy: The Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil, 1914-1940*. The University of North Carolina Press, 1996, p.24.

<sup>502</sup>Translates to Feminine Magazine.

national pride and developmental initiative. According to Virgilina, by so doing, supporters would assist Brazilian women in gaining greater intellectual freedom, which she presented as also an act of patriotism. This rhetoric shows how gender and nationalism were constantly connected in the context of Brazilian history. In 1918, Virgilina died, and the magazine gradually lost momentum, mostly due to administrative problems. Despite its short life, the *Revista Feminina* represented an initial and formal attempt to emancipate women within Brazil's traditional Catholic culture. It offered a space for women writers to submit their articles in the most diverse fields, but also reinforced traditional perceptions of acceptable female behavior by including columns on beauty tips, and on the important role of mothers in raising better citizens.<sup>503</sup>

Other initiatives followed in the footsteps of *Revista Feminina*, such as the women's magazines *A Cigarra* and *A Vida Moderna*.<sup>504</sup> The latter conducted regular opinion polls on delicate social questions regarding women's roles in Brazil. Thus, in 1927, for instance, *A Vida Moderna* challenged readers and contributors to answer questions on female emancipation, and on the validity of marriage as an institution. Many women responded, and results show that most women still believed in the importance of marriage, but also believed that women could participate in activities outside of the domestic realm. Furthermore, most supported the new trend of marrying for love, while still defending the value of moral and sexual honor.

The publication of periodicals reflected greater changes in women's roles, fashion, and in the accessibility of elite women to public spaces. By 1920s, the street was no longer off-

<sup>503</sup>Hahner, June E. *Emancipating the Female Sex: The Struggle for Women's Rights in Brazil, 1850–1940*. Duke University Press Books, 1993.

<sup>504</sup>Translating to “The Cicada” and “The Modern Life” respectively.

limits for women of the upper class, and they were increasingly seen parading in public squares. This changed the relationship between society and its urban environment, and altered traditional customs of courting. Although young respectable women still had to protect their reputation and virginity in order to secure good and stable marriages, they were allowed to practice “footing,” as the habit of walking around public squares became known. In this practice, young men and women circulated around the squares and exchanged initial smiles and glances that would later lead to formal courtship. Although there were still a lot of social and moral restraints in this practice, since formal courting remained under the control and acquiescence of fathers, the fact that young women could navigate the public sphere more freely distinctly reflected modernization.<sup>505</sup>

Change also happened in the sphere of acceptable entertainment. Modernity brought new sounds and dances and reduced the physical distance between dance partners. Musical styles such as Jazz, Foxtrot, Charleston, and Tango were imported from abroad and, along with national trends such as *Samba* and *Bossa Nova* dance music, reshaped the elite’s social sphere. Although critics considered some of these dances morally shameful and sexually permissive, children of Brazilian elites enrolled in dance schools to learn the new moves, and dance halls became the new space for the mingling of the new generation. These transformations were reinforced, and certainly inspired, by American and European trends that were shown in Brazil’s new space of social interaction: movie theaters. Despite protests from the more conservative groups that accused Hollywood of propagating sexual freedom

---

<sup>505</sup> Pinsky, Carla Bessanezi; Pedro, Joana Maria. *Nova Historia das Mulheres*. Editora Contexto, 2012.

and sinful habits among the younger population, Brazil's middle and upper class readily embraced cinema as a new form of entertainment.<sup>506</sup>

Ultimately, industrial and economic changes engendered a new tension; advocates of modernization portrayed girls' new assertiveness and independence as a sign of national progress, but many conservative groups, such as the Catholic feminists, considered that same sexual freedom a threat to national traditions. As historian Susan Besse has explained, the modernized Brazilian young woman's "growing autonomy...and educational and professional accomplishments responded to the new freedoms, bourgeois ethic, and economic necessity of Brazil's expanding urban-industrial society. But her metamorphosis from the secluded 19<sup>th</sup> matron demanded uncomfortable redefinitions of male-female relations, male roles, and family organization as well as of proper female behavior."<sup>507</sup>

Following the quest for a new moral definition of gender roles was the debate about the validity of marriage in early twentieth-century Brazil. The changes spurred by industrial transformation and women's greater access to education and employment meant that urban women now increasingly had the material means to question the over-bearing control traditionally assumed by husbands. Using the space offered to them in the new women's magazines, readers voiced their discontent publicly, often accusing their husbands of betrayal or simply complaining of their behaviors. Whether signed or anonymous, such letters from female subscribers paved the way for a growing acceptance of spousal

---

<sup>506</sup> Weinstein, Barbara. *For Social Peace in Brazil: Industrialists and the Remaking of the Working Class in Sao Paulo, 1922-1964*. The University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

<sup>507</sup> Besse, Susan K. *Restructuring Patriarchy: The Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil, 1914-1940*. The University of North Carolina Press, 1996, p. 36.

separation,<sup>508</sup> and of women's rights to voice their unhappiness and demand change from their spouses. Regardless of practical implications, conservative groups were alarmed at the vociferous manifestations of feminists and women who turned to the print media for space to share their qualms. They regarded such manifestations as indirect threats to the national order and to family hierarchy that needed to be addressed. In spite of the changes that affected primarily urban women, the rural female population still lived by traditional gender rules and expectation, especially in areas that were geographically isolated from Brazil's pulsating political and cultural centers: Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Ultimately, changes in gender roles and identities were first manifested among urban working women, and members of Brazil's middle and upper classes. For those residing in rural settings modernity, including modern relationships and expectations, emerged at a slower pace. This geographical and class distinction is still present in analysis of current rural and urban female populations in Brazil.

In the 1930s and 1940s, jurists and intellectuals faced the challenge of modernizing the Brazilian family by rethinking and revising the norms that regulated and defined marriage and physical intimacy. To help accomplish such change, they enlisted the participation of the state as a legal and natural intermediary that should oversee the redefinition of gender roles and modern values, after all, those were issues that were central to the state's claims of order and progress. To justify their calls for modernizing family and gender life, intellectuals and bureaucrats used medical research and jargon that focused on explaining the natural differences between the sexes and on understanding physiological

<sup>508</sup>Divorce was only legalized in the 1970s, so previously the term used was "separation" which did not represent a full dissolution of matrimonial ties. For more information see D'Incao, Maria Angela. *Amor e Família no Brasil*. Ed. Contexto, 1989.

manifestations of sexual pleasure. Brazilian psychiatrists and sociologists, for instance, explored the complex universe of female desire and the alleged fragility of women's nervous structure.<sup>509</sup>

Advocates of Brazilian modernization in elite urban circles argued that the nation could only develop to its full potential if women received more formal and broader education. Prior to this moment, women in rural communities were denied access to education and, instead, were expected to work in domestic tasks or even to complement the agricultural activities that involved male family members. Urban women of the middle and upper classes, on the other hand, had greater access to education, but until the mid-1900s, most of them were either educated in Catholic schools or by tutors who focused on girls' domestic training. As for urban working class women, their financial conditions forced them into the work force, which reinforced their exclusion from formal education. As Brazilian sociologist Norma Telles accurately described, the almost total exclusion of women from education in the nineteenth century and their limited access during the twentieth century created a vicious cycle: "since [women] had no formal education, they were not able to participate in the public life, and because [they] did not participate in the public life" they required no education.<sup>510</sup>

Supporters of female access to formal education did not unanimously agree that giving women more education should promote new openness in gender roles. Instead, many argued that education was desirable to make women better prepared to raise their children in an

---

<sup>509</sup>Engel, Magali. "Psiquiatria e feminilidade" In *Historia das Mulheres no Brasil*. Ed. Mary Del Priori and Carla Bassanezi. Editora Contexto, 1997.

<sup>510</sup>Telles, Norma. "Escritoras, escritas, escrituras" In *Historia das Mulheres no Brasil*. Org. Mary Del Priore, Editora Contexto, 1997., p.406.

informed manner and keep their families intact, thus supporting the healthy growth of Brazilian society. There was a distinct division of opinion between different feminist groups, one set defending radical emancipation of women, while the other supported modernization as updating and reinforcing the sanctity of the domestic sphere. Regardless of affiliation, feminists in general succeeded in transforming female education from its nineteenth century place as a privilege or luxury, to an increasingly-common twentieth-century idea of education as a necessity for daughters of urban families in good position. However, the fact that relatively-well-off women in early twentieth-century Brazil generally gained greater access to education did not represent real revolution in gender roles. That change was driven by the belief that women's natural role as mothers and caretakers meant that society should educate them in order to:

Dispel superstition and [embrace] sciences' novelties, especially those that dealt with women's natural inclinations...thus new subjects such as childcare, psychology and home economics were integrated into the new curricula especially of female-oriented careers.<sup>511</sup>

Careers such as teaching and nursing, offered middle-class urban Brazilian women new opportunities in the early twentieth-century, but followed traditional gender assumptions, rather than stretching them. Ultimately, the new access to education for Brazil's financially-secure urban women did not spread to increase educational opportunities for lower-class or unemployed women in cities and, most importantly, in rural communities.

---

<sup>511</sup>Louro, Guacira Lopes. "Mulheres na sala de aula" In *Historia das Mulheres no Brasil*. Org. Mary Del Priore, Editora Contexto, 1997., p.448.



The creation of new educational opportunities allowed middle and upper class women to gain greater professional realization and financial independence. However, despite rhetoric linking women's education and employment to modernity, Brazil's new educational system geared women towards a limited range of vocational areas of specialization, such as teaching, secretarial work, and nursing. As Besse has noted this trend "laid the groundwork for a sexual division of labor in the labor market that was crucial for preserving the gender hierarchy...women's assigned task was to civilize, elevate, and redeem the world, not transform it."<sup>512</sup>

By the 1940s, growing numbers of middle and upper class women were interested in joining the workforce, which inevitably challenged the traditional structured division of labor. Feminists and reformers justified the idea of expanding women's employment as both a financial necessity and a social utility, but still defended maternity and marriage as women's main obligations. Thus Brazilians faced the tensions of reconciling rapidly-changing reality with more conservative expectations, finding a proper balance between desired social transformations, including more educational and professional opportunities for women, and traditional family and social expectations.<sup>513</sup>

The Brazilian government tried to address this challenge of balancing female participation in the workforce against the desire to maintain society's moral and family structure. In 1932, Vargas's administration passed new legislation, Decree-Law 21.417-A, which banned women from working in night shifts, since such hours meant that they would

---

<sup>512</sup>Besse, Susan K. *Restructuring Patriarchy: The Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil, 1914-1940*. The University of North Carolina Press, 1996, p. 128.

<sup>513</sup>Giulani, Paola Cappellin. "Os movimentos de trabalhadoras e a sociedade brasileira" In *Historia das Mulheres no Brasil*. Ed. Mary Del Priori and Carla Bassanezi. Editora Contexto, 1997

be absent from their homes.<sup>514</sup> That same law also forbade women from taking positions in construction work, chemical plants and other jobs that might pose physical dangers to their health. While advocates promoted such legislation as a way of protecting women, those limits on female work also consolidated the traditional division of labor and instituted new gender prejudices within the professional realm.<sup>515</sup>

Decree-Law 21.417-A had no effect on the majority of Brazil's lower-class female contingent, who continued to work as domestic servants or in the grossly unregulated service sector. These poorer women found employment in areas that were extensions of women's traditional domestic duties, such as seamstresses, cooks, and maids. In 1940, 36.1% of urban women worked as domestic servants. Since such jobs were not legally regulated, these women were subject to the whims of their bosses, faced grueling work hours with minimum pay, and had to deal with sexual and even violent harassment from employers or other men in the household. Furthermore, while middle and upper class women working in regulated fields benefitted from rights such as paid maternity leave poor working class women had no similar privilege. Domestic servants typically were either laid off once they were pregnant, or brought their babies into the household and incorporated those children into the sphere of domestic service once they were old enough to help in menial tasks. This lack of extensive rights for poorer working women created a deeper social separation between the classes, one that was also fueled by gender conflicts.<sup>516</sup>

---

<sup>514</sup> Accepted exceptions to this rule were women working as nurses, in hospitals or other institutions, and in enterprises such as telephone companies. In those cases their job was considered of vital national importance, which justified the sacrifice of their family life.

<sup>515</sup> Araujo, Clara; Scalon, Celi. *Genero, Familia e Trabalho no Brasil*. Editora FGV, 2005.

<sup>516</sup> Hahner, June E. *Emancipating the Female Sex: The Struggle for Women's Rights in Brazil, 1850–1940*. Duke University Press Books, 1993.

### **The Development of Feminism in Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Brazil**

From 1910 to 1930, the term “feminism” gained significance in Brazil and became a topic of debate and controversy in Brazilian society. The leading figure behind Brazil’s organized feminist movement was Bertha Lutz, born in 1894 in São Paulo, and the daughter of Adolpho Lutz, a Swiss-born doctor who made a career in Brazil studying tropical diseases. Bertha was thus born into wealth and status, and benefitted from the opportunity to travel abroad, where she studied biology at the University of Paris. When she returned to Brazil, Lutz decided to study law at the University of Rio de Janeiro. In 1919, she was appointed secretary of the capital’s National Museum. Professionally she went on to create a successful career as an administrator, scientist, and politician, and was also well-known as an activist for women’s political, financial, and social rights.

Her trajectory was unique for the time, and is certainly explained by her elite and liberal upbringing. Her fight for women’s emancipation began slowly and cautiously in 1918, when she wrote an article published in a local magazine calling for Brazilian women to organize into an association that did not challenge the country’s order, but challenged its outdated gender policies. Lutz declared that women should unite in “an association [not] of suffragettes who break windows in the streets, but a society of Brazilians who understand that the woman should not live parasitically off of her sex, taking advantage of the animal instincts of man, but ought to be useful, educate herself and her children, and become capable of fulfilling the political duties that the future cannot but share with her.”<sup>517</sup> Answering her modest appeal, upper class women created the first Brazilian feminist

---

<sup>517</sup>Besse, Susan K. *Restructuring Patriarchy: The Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil, 1914-1940*. The University of North Carolina Press, 1996, p.166.

organization in 1918, called the “League for the Intellectual Emancipation of Women”. Gradually, Bertha directed the League towards three main areas of demand: education, employment, and suffrage. The group soon proved its effectiveness, helping spur the 1922 government decision to open access to Brazil’s most prestigious school, *Colégio Don Pedro II*, to female students.

During this period, several other feminist groups emerged, each self-identified with the feminist movement yet defending claims so diverse that the organization of a truly unified movement seemed unobtainable. While the League for the Intellectual Emancipation of Women demanded greater political rights and new female social roles, the main mission for a faction of Catholic feminists involved demanding greater respect for the role of women in maintaining family values and national order. This latter group of urban elite women used the printed media to promote its beliefs, especially the magazine *Revista Feminina*. In its articles, women from this Catholic and conservative group declared that rather than challenging traditional moral values, feminism should, instead, focus on gaining women’s rights while advocating for the perseverance of women’s traditional domestic roles. In other words, as Besse has explained, they claimed that “feminism, properly understood, was the fruit not of revolutionary desires but of profoundly conservative instincts. Its goal was not destruction or subversion but the preservation and reconstruction of Christian morality.”<sup>518</sup> This vision supported the education of women but mainly as a way to protect honor, the family institution, and the Fatherland.

---

<sup>518</sup>Besse, Susan K. *Restructuring Patriarchy: The Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil, 1914-1940*. The University of North Carolina Press, 1996, p. 183.

Controversy over the formation and definition of a feminist group was such that a third organization rejected the term “feminism” altogether, accusing it of being too bourgeois and of not advancing women’s rights universally. In 1922, Bertha Lutz was appointed Brazil’s official representative in the 1922 Pan American Conference of Women, held in Baltimore, USA. Building on those international connections, Lutz then contacted US suffrage leader Carrie Chapman Catt, for advice on creating a new national feminist organization in Brazil that could bridge the ideological clashes dividing different branches of feminism. Advocates came together in 1922 to create the *Federação Brasileira pelo Progresso Feminino* (FBPF),<sup>519</sup> which was designed to unite feminists around the central goals of increasing women’s education, protecting female rights, and promoting financial independence, proprietorship, and suffrage.<sup>520</sup> Despite some resistance from conservative sectors, the FBPF gained notoriety, doubtlessly helped by nation’s quest for modernity. Brazil’s intellectual elite wanted to be and act modern, and discussing women’s rights was also a sign of the new times. The organization won two major victories in 1932 that satisfied its different constituencies: women’s suffrage and the establishment of Mothers’ Day, which was important to the more conservative feminist group that valued women’s domestic and family roles.<sup>521</sup>

In 1930, the revolution that ended the decentralization of national power and the old oligarchic regime also brought new opportunities for the feminist movement. Vargas’

---

<sup>519</sup> Brazilian Federation for Female Progress.

<sup>520</sup> Macaulay, Fiona. “Getting Gender on the Policy Agenda: A Study of a Brazilian Feminist Lobby Group” In *Hidden Histories of Gender and the State in Latin America*, Ed. Elizabeth Dore and Maxine Molyneux. Duke University Press, 2000.

<sup>521</sup> Macaulay, Fiona. “Getting Gender on the Policy Agenda: A Study of a Brazilian Feminist Lobby Group” In *Hidden Histories of Gender and the State in Latin America*, Ed. Elizabeth Dore and Maxine Molyneux. Duke University Press, 2000.

government was not openly supportive of greater freedom for women; instead, his administration preferred to strengthen female roles within the domestic sphere. Nevertheless, the new president's concern with establishing social welfare and satisfying the labor sector's demands created an opening for the FBPF to push for legislative change. From that perspective, granting women more rights within society and the workforce advanced modernization, by promoting a new consumer attitude and greater availability of labor.<sup>522</sup> Beyond helping women get the right to vote, Lutz and the FBPF won other important victories by 1936, including giving women the right to own property separate from husband's direct control, and greater access to education. Advocates aimed to expand such reforms into a more sweeping widening of women's role, transforming Brazilian culture and society to support complete female intellectual, financial, and even sexual emancipation.

Such ambitious plans for cultural reformulation ran into trouble in 1937, after Vargas executed a military coup that inaugurated his dictatorial government under the name of *Estado Novo*. Under that authoritarian rule, Vargas suspended Congress and voting rights, and closed political and social organizations. This forced the FBPF to stop its activities, and halted actual implementation of the legislation passed to give women more property rights, educational access, and political rights. Ultimately, Vargas' use of propaganda and national rhetoric reinforced strict gender roles by granting legislative labor rights to the working class, such as maternity leave and greater protection for women in the work space. Instead of

---

<sup>522</sup>Fausto, Boris. *Getulio Vargas*. Companhia Das Letras, 2006.

truly emancipating women, these state measures further reinforced the existing division of labor and consolidated traditional and hierarchical social relations.<sup>523</sup>

More than that, Lutz and other feminist advocates had never managed to spread political organization and activism to the vast population of poor rural women. The nature of Brazilian feminism as an urban elite movement guaranteed that those changes that did emerge affected primarily the middle and upper classes, without spurring any real alteration in traditional gender hierarchy and social and racial structures. While the government allowed political change to improve the lives of urban workers and elite women, it did nothing to empower them, keeping both groups tied in the illusion of power and advances caused by a paternalistic system. A deeper radical questioning of women's roles in Brazil would not come until the late 1970s and mid-1980s, when opponents of the country's dictatorship pressed for the democratization and reevaluation of national political structures.<sup>524</sup> Even then, issues facing women living in isolated rural communities remained low priority; into the twenty-first century, class, racial, and gender biases still pervade Brazil's social organization, and the country suffers from a highly hierarchical society, which has proven difficult to overcome.

So despite the political efforts of the FBPF and other feminist advocates, Brazil before World War II saw little or no change in the lives of the millions of poor, working class women, either in cities or rural areas. Especially in the countryside, traditional values dominated, including the habit (outdated in the cities) of restricting honorable women from circulating in public spaces. Furthermore, for rural illiterate communities existing in semi-

<sup>523</sup>Besse, Susan K. *Restructuring Patriarchy: The Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil, 1914-1940*. The University of North Carolina Press, 1996.

<sup>524</sup>Machado, Lia Zanotta. *Feminismo em Movimento*. Editora Francis, 2010.

isolation from more developed urban centers, it made little difference in practice that the Brazilian legislature had granted women greater access to education, since they simply could not manage to attend school often. Poor women were also disenfranchised by their ignorance of the political system and lack of training in militancy; they could not and did not know how to lobby for local changes, and were thus relegated to the outskirts of the political sphere.

Another element that limited any real change in poor, rural women's condition was the fact that many of the elite feminist activists actually benefitted from the maintenance of a socially unequal system. In order to free themselves to seek education and employment, relatively well-off women relied on their domestic servants' care of their children and help with domestic tasks of cooking and cleaning.<sup>525</sup> Moreover, although the FBPF defended the emancipation of all women, it did not address race and class prejudices that permeated society, and as a consequence, most of the elite feminists' actions and beliefs still reflected those broader biases. This setting of disadvantage and marginalization meant that rural women, such as many of the women who would migrate to Brasilia in the 1950s, were still tied to a system of traditional values and unequal, discriminatory practices, which also included conservative considerations of women's sexual rights.

### **Female sexuality and the drive for sexual liberation**

In 1985, Brazilian anthropologist Roberto da Matta published his work "The House and the Street: Space, Citizenship, Women, and Violence in Brazil."<sup>526</sup> He described Brazil's

---

<sup>525</sup>Besse, Susan K. *Restructuring Patriarchy: The Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil, 1914-1940*. The University of North Carolina Press, 1996.

<sup>526</sup>Matta, Roberto da. *A Casa e a Rua: Espaço, Cidadania, Mulher e Morte no Brasil*. Sao Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1985.



social order as separated by the metaphors of the “house” and “street,” the first representing order and hierarchy, while the second was defined as an unprotected space of physical and moral dangers. In his analysis, Brazilian women of all races and classes experienced each realm similarly, and were bound by the same moral standards and social expectations. In this sense, within the domestic sphere all women lived in a state of submission to their male heads-of-households; in the public domain, they had to abide by strict moral laws that dictated fashion, social interaction, and appropriate behavior. In Da Matta’s interpretation, what varied was the fact that poor women were forced to access the streets in search for labor, but they still had to abide by the same social dictums of upper-class women.

Historian Sueann Caulfield, on the other hand, argued in her book *In Defense of Honor*<sup>527</sup> that a person’s relationship and experiences within those two spaces varied according to social status, gender, and race. After looking at criminal records in Rio de Janeiro, Caulfield concluded that prosecutors, law enforcement agents, victims, and defendants generally used the same vocabulary of honor and gender when dealing with allegations of sexual crimes committed either on the streets or within the sanctity of the domestic sphere. What changed was the legal interpretation and the intensity of social judgment that varied by race, class, and gender. Ultimately, this meant that a woman’s class and racial composition determined her moral accountability, and even if poor women attempted to use the same legal resources of upper-class females, their status automatically undermined the extent of their legal and social protection.

---

<sup>527</sup>Caulfield, Sueann. *In Defense of Honor. Sexual Morality, Modernity, and Nation in Early Twentieth-Century Brazil*. Duke University Press, 2000.

Caulfield argued that if all groups shared a common trend, it was the massive obsession with young women's virginity. This concern with sexual honor was inherited from colonial traditions, dictated by a politically present and socially influential Catholic Church, and was transported into Brazil's vision of modernity. In the early and mid-1900s, the Brazilian political and intellectual elite pressed for modernization, which many interpreted as being morally and sexually permissive. The challenge for cultural conservatives then became one of balancing traditional values with a rapidly changing society, through the recreation of patriarchy. As Caulfield wrote, "without the moralizing force of women's sexual honesty, modernization – a catch-all term that meant many things to many people – would bring the dissolution of the family, rampant criminality, and general social chaos."<sup>528</sup> This fear of immorality appeared in the more conservative feminist organizations, which advocated for female political and productive emancipation, not sexual freedom.

In terms of laws regarding female sexuality and honor, the legal code of 1890, promulgated after the inauguration of Brazil's First Republic in 1889, examined extensively the physiological components of virginity, and included medical terminology to describe physical proof for the moral crime of illegitimate sexual relations. That legal code assumed that the act of "deflowering" a girl, as it was often termed, left visible marks, which made it easy to prove in court and could then be punished by forcing the male offenders to marry their sexual victims. The focus on the physiological aspect of intercourse also protected men's honor and property by offering them the legal option of returning their wives if, after the wedding night, they were found to be dishonest by not being virgins.<sup>529</sup>

<sup>528</sup>Caulfield, Sueann. *In Defense of Honor. Sexual Morality, Modernity, and Nation in Early Twentieth-Century Brazil*. Duke University Press, 2000, p.4.

<sup>529</sup>Soihet, Rachel. "Mulheres pobres e violencia no Brasil urbano." In *Historia das Mulheres no Brasil*. Org. Mary Del Priore, Editora Contexto, 1997., pp. 362-400.

Following the growing concern with sexuality and modernity, jurists and intellectuals in 1928, attempted to understand the social implications of sexual crimes and to re-evaluate the efficacy of the 1890 legal code. But ongoing racial and class prejudices continued to shape ideas about women's sexuality; one medical practitioner who served as a consultant in legal cases involving sexual offenses stated that "we all know that the sexual preoccupation predominates in inferior types, in whom it constitutes a fixed idea."<sup>530</sup> This statement clearly demonstrates how jurists viewed sexual impulses and offenses as natural consequences of inferior races' and classes' moral and physical weakness. In her examinations of court cases in Rio de Janeiro, Caulfield realized that starting around the 1920s, a growing number of working class families approached the legal system with allegations of sexual misconduct and lost virginity. Caulfield explains the change by pointing to this class' greater incidence of female headed households. In other words, for many poor girls without a central paternal figure, the only power accessible to them to help pressure young men into marriage was the local authority, or police.

With time, jurists and Brazil's political elite started viewing the country's excessive concern with the physiological aspect of premarital sex as retrograde, especially since science could not prove sexual intercourse any more based solely on the constitution of a woman's hymen. Therefore, to maintain society's moral standards, authorities began to discuss premarital sex not primarily as a physical act, but rather an act of moral threat and disruption of order. Urban elites argued that Brazil would only truly progress once the population was educated, and they reached an understanding that the control of sexual

---

<sup>530</sup>Soihet, Rachel. "Mulheres pobres e violencia no Brasil urbano." In *Historia das Mulheres no Brasil*. Org. Mary Del Priore, Editora Contexto, 1997, p. 18.

impulses was a sign of civility and development. Judge Francisco Viveiro de Castro declared in the early 1900s: “respect for the honor of women is not a sentiment innate in man, but rather a conquest of civilization, the victory of moral ideas over the brutality of the instincts.”<sup>531</sup>

Although this interpretation of gender roles and moral suppression of sexual excesses was fully developed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as a sign of national modernization, it stemmed from social and cultural shifts of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, after Brazil transitioned to a republican government in 1889.<sup>532</sup> As historian Martha de Abreu Esteves has explained, in late nineteenth-century Brazil, there was a common understanding that honest men were hardworking and respected by their communities.<sup>533</sup> The burden of honor hence lay in a man’s productive capability. Honest women, on the other hand, were classified as such based on their sexual practices and moral virtues, which were also influenced by their social status and even by their race. The process of determining a woman’s truthfulness and moral value in cases of pre or extra-marital sex depended significantly on her position in society. For girls considered honorable “family girls” and who were under the guidance and surveillance of mothers and fathers, domestic seclusion was paramount in maintaining their sexual honor. Therefore, their excursions into the public sphere were limited and controlled. However, for working class women who needed to access the streets daily, venturing into the public realm meant both direct physical danger and moral threat; it was harder for them to prove their honesty and sexual decency.

---

<sup>531</sup>Caufield, Sueann. *In Defense of Honor. Sexual Morality, Modernity, and Nation in Early Twentieth-Century Brazil*. Duke University Press, 2000, p.19.

<sup>532</sup>Costa, Emilia Viotti da. *The Brazilian Empire Myths and Histories*. The University of Chicago Press, 1985.

<sup>533</sup>Esteves, Martha de Abreu. *Meninas Perdidas: Os Populares e o Cotidiano do Amor no Rio de Janeiro da Belle Epoque*. Editora Paz e Terra, 1989.

The 1890 Legal Code stipulated that there were two types of dishonest women: the clandestine prostitute and the public prostitute. The first was defined as a sexually permissive woman who might or might not receive payment for sex, but who did not publicly solicit clients.<sup>534</sup> This definition was broad enough to include single women who had pre or extra-marital sex and who were found guilty of dishonesty. Public prostitutes, on the other hand, while carrying the negative social stigma of sexual promiscuity, were generally considered a necessary evil who offered men an outlet that helped preserve the dignity and sexual integrity of society's honest girls. This was evident in Brazilian society's informal acceptance of the establishment of brothels in every town. Prostitutes operating brothels were despised by elite females, but had access to elite males, and were able to amass significant fortunes and even soft political power within their societies. To explain the complex position of prostitution in Brazilian society during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Sandra Lauderdale Graham says that "although city residents repeatedly refused to pass laws against prostitution, they nevertheless found repugnant the prostitutes who walked the central streets or who brazenly showed themselves at doorways or windows half-naked."<sup>535</sup> Thus, in Rio de Janeiro and in other urban and political centers, brothels were important elements of social structure. High-class *coquettes*, who modeled their style and behavior on European lines, "paid concubines, and elegant *bordellos*, often run by European madams and mimicking Parisian establishments were a prominent feature of upper-class men's social and political life."<sup>536</sup>

<sup>534</sup>Caufield, Sueann. "The Birth of Manguê: Race, Nation, and the Politics of Prostitution in Rio de Janeiro, 1850-1942." In *Sex and Sexuality in Latin America*. Ed. Daniel Balderston and Donna Guy, 86-100. New York University Press, 1997.

<sup>535</sup>Graham, Sandra Lauderdale. *House and street – the domestic world of servants and masters in nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro*. University of Texas Press, 1992, p.45.

<sup>536</sup>Caufield, Sueann. *In Defense of Honor. Sexual Morality, Modernity, and Nation in Early Twentieth-Century Brazil*. Duke University Press, 2000, p.58.

Luciano Figueiredo's work on women from the state of Minas Gerais argued that Brazil's contradictory relation with prostitution originates in its colonial period, when the practice was both wanted and discreetly maintained by local politicians and the elite, and violently condemned by the Portuguese Crown as a moral transgression that threatened to undermine the sanctity of marriage and social order.<sup>537</sup> One of its negative consequences which greatly worried first the Colonial and, after independence, the Imperial government, was the nineteenth-century increase in the number of illegitimate and abandoned children. In the many cases of orphaned or abandoned children the state was responsible for their survival and, together with the Catholic Church, had to keep public institutions open and running to house these destitute minors.

Another practice that enabled prostitution was *alcoviteirice*, which represented the renting of rooms in a household specifically for romantic and sexual encounters. *Alcoviteirice* offered young and daring couples the opportunity of meeting without their families' strict scrutiny, but also facilitated what became known as "complementary" or "street" prostitution. This was often practiced by women who had other sources of income, such as seamstresses or vendors, but who occasionally needed to complement their finances.<sup>538</sup>

Prostitution was also a practice that often affected entire households. It was common for nineteenth-century prostitutes to invite men into their house, which they shared with family members such as sisters, aunts, and daughters. It was also a custom for lower class men to accept the prostitution of their daughters in order to increase their family income.

<sup>537</sup>Figueiredo, Luciano. "Mulheres nas Minas Gerais" In *Historia das Mulheres no Brasil*. Ed. Mary Del Priore, 578-638, Ed. Contexto, 1997.

<sup>538</sup> Ibid.

Widows in the unfortunate position of not having the necessary financial means to care for themselves and their children also practiced street prostitution, or approached local brothels asking for employment.<sup>539</sup> This clearly shows that prostitution affected an entire society, from the lower class worker to the middle class widow who found herself in a condition of financial destitution.

With the advent of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the country's consequent quest for modernization, the contradiction in Brazilian society's relationship with prostitution grew; as a country on its way towards modernization, Brazil had to control overt prostitution, but still did not regulate nor criminalize the practice. In other words, Brazilian political and intellectual elites attempted to decrease street prostitution, which they publicly considered a rampant moral transgression and a serious threat to social order and citizens' health. However, the habit of attending brothels was deeply engrained in Brazil's gender tradition. This further consolidated the country's contradictory approach to prostitution, and resulted in the legal persecution of random acts of prostitution, or of the practice of street prostitution, while unofficially allowing its organized practice to persevere in the form of brothels. This was especially true in areas that remained relatively isolated from the more developed political coastal centers such as Rio de Janeiro.<sup>540</sup>

With the early twentieth-century's quest for modernity, and especially after the foundation of feminist organizations such as the FBPF, social and cultural expectations gradually changed. This meant that middle and upper class young women had access to

---

<sup>539</sup>Graham, Sandra Lauderdale. "Slavery's Impasse: Slave Prostitutes, Small-time Mistresses, and the Brazilian Law of 1871" *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (Oct. 1991) pp.683-684.

<sup>540</sup>Green, James N. *Beyond Carnival: Male Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century Brazil*. University of Chicago Press, 2001.

spaces such as nocturnal dance houses, jazz clubs, and other public meeting places that were previously male dominated. In 1920s Brazil, the term “modern woman” echoed sentiments and roles in Europe and the United States, and symbolized the dawn of a new era, one that defied male dominance and patriarchy. For the young generation this was a moment of exciting and liberating possibilities; for the older generation this meant a real threat to family integrity and patriarchal gender roles. The obvious problem then was to create a version of the Brazilian modern woman that reflected the country’s unique cultural traits and that could be used as justification to a reformulation of patriarchy under the guise of relative modernization of family and moral values.

Following this trend, a new organization was created in 1925 by Brazil’s intellectual elite: the *Conselho Brasileiro de Higiene Social*, (Brazilian Council for Social Hygiene) or CBHS. Its foundation followed Brazil’s first Congress of Social Hygiene, in 1923, and reflected the elite’s enthusiasm with social medicine, and Eugenics.<sup>541</sup> The CBHS’ goal was to counter what political and intellectual elites considered as moral threats and to help the country balance modernity and conservatism. The previous colonial and nineteenth-century obsession with female chastity reflected a belief that sexual honor was paramount to the healthy development of the nation and its society. By the late 1920s, this had led to an increase in both rape and domestic violence against women in the name of family honor which, in turn, motivated legislators to find a balance between moral expectations and legal protection for women. Thus, the CBHS and its members publicly rejected the excessive

---

<sup>541</sup>Nunes, Everardo Duarte. “Saúde Coletiva: história e paradigmas.” *Interface (Botucatu)*, Vol. 2, No. 3, (1998), pp. 107-116.



valorization of sexual honor as a representation of progress and civilization, arguing instead that the increase in domestic and sexual violence reflected the nation's backwardness.<sup>542</sup>

To counter this and to offer a structured new ideal, the CBHS began a national campaign to reduce the number of crimes against women, an effort that had the support of many feminists but that was led in the CBHS by male representatives. The real aim was not women's sexual liberation, but popular education of both men and women to reduce the number of sexually-motivated crimes. In other words, through education and legal reform, these activists hoped to create a movement where women would return to their valued roles of respected and modest wives and mothers, and men would learn to control their sexual and violent impulses. However, this ambitious attempt to bring about cultural change in the popular spectrum, especially among the lower classes, failed. Throughout the 1920s and beyond, women and their parents or guardians still used the "deflowering" argument to pressure men into marriage, and often turned to police stations for legal support.

Despite the fact that the legal system was still used as a possible means of forcing men into marriage in order to restore a girl's honor, what really changed were the defendants' and victims' discourses in court. With changing ideas in the 1920s about sexuality and honor, defendants and victims focused more on arguments of moral depravity, rather than relying mostly on the extensive description of women's physiology. Thus, while the loss of virginity was still important in legal case hearings, lawyers relied heavily on accounts of moral respectability or depravity rather than calling on several medical experts to testify on the physical elements of virginity. This change was motivated by growing medical

---

<sup>542</sup>Stepan, Leys. *The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America*. Cornell University Press, 1996.

acceptance of complacent hymens, which explained why some women accused of improper sexual relations were found to be virgins during their medical examinations.<sup>543</sup> Therefore, following these new medical and legal trends, male defendants facing charges of rape or improper advances claimed that their victims were liberated women, which carried implications of sexual permissiveness founded on moral judgments, instead of relying only on medical evidence.<sup>544</sup>

Legal arguments defending men's advances to women often alleged that those women were found roaming the streets, regardless of whether they had to do so for work and out of need. Lawyers also cited irregularities in a woman's family structure to prove her moral depravity. If there had been any illegitimate pregnancy within the family, and if the accuser lacked a father figure, then she had the makings of a sexually depraved woman. This argument served to explain, and even justify, men's actions of "deflowering" young girls by suggesting to the court that the behavior did not matter, since they were not honest girls.<sup>545</sup>

While defendants used their interpretation of a woman's social life as an excuse for their sexual advances, women and their families defended their sexual activity by citing arguments of trust and naïveté. However, historians Caulfield, Del Priore, and Macdowell Santos have found that in the majority of legal cases filed during the 1920s and 1930s regarding rape or sexual honor, the court usually found male offenders innocent, especially

---

<sup>543</sup>Blank, Hanne. *Virgin, the Untouched History*. Macmillan, 2007.

<sup>544</sup>Prior to this moment, defendants usually argued that the victims were not virgins at the time of the alleged attacks. This was further used as evidence that, since they were already sexually experienced they were prone to search for other sexual relations and were too weak to resist the urges that they were now feeling. Essentially, both arguments are similar in their attempt to justify male sexuality and power over the female body. However, while one sought legitimization in medical evidence and discussion of physiology, hormonal changes, and hymen structure, the other focused on the general assumption that weak morality, or the lack of respectable values, was the ultimate excuse for sexual advances.

<sup>545</sup>Caulfield, Sueann; Esteves, Martha de Abreu. "Fifty Years of Virginity in Rio de Janeiro: Sexual Politics and Gender Roles in Juridical Popular Discourse, 1890-1940." *Luso-Brazilian Review* 30, I, 1993: 47-74.

if the female accuser came from a lower class and was not defended by a male family member. When fathers were present in court and testified on behalf of their daughters' honor, the possibility of a favorable outcome for the female victim increased. This reflected the gendered bias of a society that was greatly paternalistic and that, as such, valued masculine honor over a woman's word. Unfortunately, far from being a tendency limited to Brazil's early 1900s, this trend lasted well into the 1960s.<sup>546</sup>

Further complicating Brazil's legal construction of sexual honor throughout the mid-1900s, were racial and class considerations. Brazilian society inherited from its colonial existence the preconception that black, or racially mixed, women were more sensual than their white counterparts and, as such, were natural seducers of men.<sup>547</sup> These claims undermined minority women's accusations of "deflowering." More than that, this stigma reflected the fact that lower class and non-white women were still significantly excluded from the political and social discussion of modernity. Poor or minority women were marginalized and excluded from formal feminist discourse during the 1930s, but more than that, even when such women were included in legal and intellectual discussions, they were still considered sexually and morally different from white, upper class women. The higher incidence of births out of wedlock and the smaller number of legitimate marriages among the lower class and non-white population seemed to prove their deviant sexuality, rather than reflecting deeper issues of political and social inequality.<sup>548</sup>

---

<sup>546</sup>Vianna, Adriana R. B; Carrara, Sergio. "Sexual Politics and Sexual Rights in Brazil: A Case Study" *The Politics of Sexuality in Latin America*. Ed. Javier Corrales and Mario Pecheny, 122-134. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010.

<sup>547</sup>Rebhun, L. A. "Sexuality, Color, and Stigma Among Northeast Brazilian Women". *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, New Series, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Jun, 2004) pp. 183-199.

<sup>548</sup>Vianna, Adriana R. B; Carrara, Sergio. "Sexual Politics and Sexual Rights in Brazil: A Case Study" *The Politics of Sexuality in Latin America*. Ed. Javier Corrales and Mario Pecheny, 122-134. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010.

For these reasons, Brazil's new and modern "moralists" (a group that included jurists, medical practitioners, and urban intellectuals in general, both male and female), argued that the government needed to educate poor minority women, in order to help them control their pervasive sexual impulses. In other words, while development enthusiasts pushed for the expansion of education to the lower classes, which included the creation of vocational schools in the 1940s by Brazil's industrial elite,<sup>549</sup> "moralists" defended the inclusion of religious topics, personal hygiene, and domestic education in the schools' curricula. Thus, when the Brazilian state of the 1930s implemented substantial legal and social changes, it did so in ways that confirmed sexist and racist beliefs.<sup>550</sup>

Ultimately, a moral double standard prevailed in Brazilian society well into the mid-1900s, in which the urban white elite forced lower-class and minority women to accept notions of conventional morality, but those women's actual behavior, both publicly and domestically, reflected ongoing economic and social difficulties in their lives. While young, poor girls were raised to defend their honor and to seek marriage on the same moral terms as wealthier white girls, reality and financial challenges meant that few disadvantaged women would in fact get married; most continued to live in arrangements of consensual union.<sup>551</sup>

Despite this difference between lower and upper-class women, both groups used their sexuality as means of obtaining, or at least attempting to obtain, greater social status. Middle and upper-class females were educated to treat sexual intercourse as a right that their

---

<sup>549</sup>Weinstein, Barbara. *For Social Peace in Brazil: Industrialists and the Remaking of the Working Class in Sao Paulo, 1922-1964*. The University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

<sup>550</sup>Caulfield, Sueann. *In Defense of Honor. Sexual Morality, Modernity, and Nation in Early Twentieth-Century Brazil*. Duke University Press, 2000.

<sup>551</sup>Caulfield, Sueann; Esteves, Martha de Abreu. "Fifty Years of Virginity in Rio de Janeiro: Sexual Politics and Gender Roles in Juridical Popular Discourse, 1890-1940." *Luso-Brazilian Review* 30, I, 1993: 47-74.

husbands had over their bodies, one that was only granted through marriage. Similarly, lower class women believed that through sex, they could keep a man beside them in a consensual union, or even get a man to marry them. Men often promised unity or marriage to coerce young girls into sexual relations.<sup>552</sup> This dialogue between the sexes was a gamble, since for the girl, losing her virginity meant risking social ostracism and losing a symbol of female power that should supposedly help her guarantee a future stable union. In other words, racial and class differences ensured that women of different races, classes, and places in Brazil experienced gender differently. In spite of the political and productive emancipation that feminists won in the 1930s, conservative expectations prevailed well past the 1950s, the decade in which Brasilia was built.

Women in Brazil during the decade of the fifties, also known as the “Golden Years,”<sup>553</sup> lived in a condition of contradiction between the firmly established patriarchy and greater female access to information and public space, at least for urban well-off white women. After World War II and well into the 1950s, Brazil’s middle-class grew alongside an increase in industrial development.<sup>554</sup> Consumerism also flourished, and the physical and moral distance between men and women decreased in city life. In spite of important advances and changes regarding female access to the public domain and to the labor market, sexual and moral expectations remained similar to those of previous decades. While more women joined the professional world attempting to build careers, they still faced gendered prejudice

---

<sup>552</sup>Abreu, Martha. “Meninas Perdidas” In *Historia das Crianças no Brasil*. Ed. Mary Del Priore, 289-316. Editora Contexto, 1999.

<sup>553</sup>The term in Portuguese is *Anos Dourados*, and represented a period in which Brazil’s middle and upper classes prospered, and lived in awe of modernity and new foreign technologies and fashion. This was also the period of relative freedom, especially since starting in 1964 censorship was increased by the military dictatorship that resulted in deaths and exiles lasting over twenty years.

<sup>554</sup>Skidmore, Thomas. *Politics in Brazil 1930-1964: An Experiment in Democracy*. Updated. Oxford University Press, USA, 2007.

and were largely considered subordinate and inferior to men. The patriarchal traditions of the 1930s prevailed, and women were still prepared first to act as good mothers and wives, and second as professionals. As long as their careers did not interfere with their domestic roles, they could seek employment.<sup>555</sup>

During the 1950s and 1960s, magazines directed towards a female readership, such as *Jornal das Moças*,<sup>556</sup> and *Vida Doméstica*,<sup>557</sup> reinforced the ideal of a paternalistic system with the desirable family nucleus constituted by an authoritative father and a loving, pure, white mother. Instead of reflecting national reality, such images only underlined the gap between the white urban population and the non-white, poor, rural communities that generally lacked such a perfectly structured family life. Idealized white family values only consolidated the gendered class and race biases that already underlined Brazil's social relations. During Brazil's "Golden Years," prevailing media images, social messages, and political assumptions defined gender roles by strictly conservative identities that kept women relegated to the role of passive protectors of morality and purity, and positioned men as their families' central providers. In other words, to be feminine was to be demure, well-educated and content, while masculinity was defined in terms of an adventurous spirit and strong resolve.<sup>558</sup>

To help confirm the patriarchal gender roles, magazines used a classification that further defined women according to their acts and social expectations. *Moças de Família*, or

---

<sup>555</sup>Rago, Margareth. "Trabalho Feminino e Sexualidade" In *Historia das Mulheres no Brasil*. Ed. Mary Del Priore, 578-638, Ed. Contexto, 1997.

<sup>556</sup> Translates to "Ladies' Journal".

<sup>557</sup> Translates to "Domestic Life".

<sup>558</sup>Bassanezi, Carla. "Mulheres dos Anos Dourados." In *Historia das Mulheres no Brasil*. Ed. Mary Del Priore, 607-639, Ed. Contexto, 1997.

“Family Girls” were praised as the paramount symbol of female purity and education. Those nice girls were expected to obey their parents, protect their sexual honor, and learn the trade of being a respectable housewife and mother. Many were expected to study and even work, but only until they got married, after which society preferred they abandon such endeavors and focus on their domestic obligations. In practice, that option was primarily limited to Brazil’s upper class women, since many middle and lower class families still relied on women’s employment to complement their households’ monthly income.<sup>559</sup>

Beneath the category of “family girls,” media accounts placed the group of what they called *Moças Levianas*, or “Frivolous Girls,” who were known for either being openly sexually permissive or for having been coerced by boys into giving up their virginity. This category included girls who had to deal with the unwanted consequences of sexuality, such as illegitimate pregnancies and forced hasty marriages. But the term “frivolous girls” was broad enough and politicized to also include radical feminists trying to break traditional moral and sexual gender roles. To further emphasize the strict distinction between “family girls” and “frivolous girls,” authorities advised that good girls should entirely avoid the company of their fallen counterparts, for risk of having their own reputations tarnished by the latter’s sexual mistakes. The media placed prostitutes in the lowest category of all, but that view reflected some internal contradictions. Society regarded prostitutes as women suffering from moral depravity, but under the ongoing double standard, prostitutes served the unofficial purpose of offering accepted sexual education for young men, and of liberating negative, male sexual tension.<sup>560</sup>

<sup>559</sup>Rago, Margareth. “Trabalho Feminino e Sexualidade” In *Historia das Mulheres no Brasil*. Ed. Mary Del Priore, 578-638, Ed. Contexto, 1997.

<sup>560</sup>Bassanezi, Carla. “Mulheres dos Anos Dourados.” In *Historia das Mulheres no Brasil*. Ed. Mary Del Priore, 607-639, Ed. Contexto, 1997.

In post-World War II Brazil, conservative belief maintained that a woman's natural inclination and desire was to get married. But especially in urban well-off white communities, young adults had established a right to choose their spouses, after all, it would be too outdated to practice arranged unions. Therefore, society aimed to educate young elite girls properly, to help them choose their partners wisely, and teach them to control their sexual desires if men made any physical advances during courtship. It was a double standard in which the selection of a suitable suitor became a girl's responsibility; a decision she should make with her parents' guidance and approval while protecting her virginity. Men, on the other hand, were raised to be sexually active and assertive, while also having to control their impulses and respect the honor of "family girls." For young teenagers teeming with hormones and struggling to carve an identity within a modern world, finding the right balance between independence and control, assertiveness and respect was both a challenge and a social obligation. The periodical *O Cruzeiro* editorialized on May 24<sup>th</sup>, 1958:

Experience warns ladies that want to meet young suitors that, while they should trust themselves, they should never do so to the extent of risking temptation. Love can be a blinding force...to meet a stranger and go out [alone] with him represents [moral] danger.<sup>561</sup>

The same editorial went on to warn against sexual liberties, stating that: 'it greatly depends on the lady how she is treated by men. If she uses provocative and enticing clothes and manners, she loses the right of complaining against the boy if he makes [sexual] advances.' Ultimately, as historian Bassanezi has written, the pre-established system and its

---

<sup>561</sup>Bassanezi, Carla. "Mulheres dos Anos Dourados." In *Historia das Mulheres no Brasil*. Ed. Mary Del Priore, 607-639, Ed. Contexto, 1997, p. 612.



morality “favored masculine sexual experiences while restricting feminine sexuality to the conventional parameters of traditional marriage.”<sup>562</sup>

In this new setting of modern gender roles, few things truly changed even for well-off urban white young women. While parents no longer openly chose their children’s spouses, they still exerted a great deal of influence on a young woman’s final marital decision. Likewise, it was a distinct obligation of the father-figure to protect a young girl’s moral and sexual honor, and a family’s reputation relied greatly on her virginity. To ensure that this patriarchal tradition persevered, state education campaigns and magazines reinforced the belief that when a marriage occurred without the parents’ consent and approval, it was deemed to fail, and a failed marriage represented social shame and possibly a life of unhappiness. It is worth noting that at the time the only legal recourse for the termination of a marriage was *desquite*, or “separation” which did not entail complete dissolution of marital status. With *desquite*, men and women could not remarry, and women who agreed to live with a “separated” man risked the label of “concubines.” Unsurprisingly, while the so-called “concubine” suffered legal and social prejudice, men were rarely criticized for living with another woman after their separation; it was considered a natural masculine trait and right to seek another domestic and sexual partner. Divorce was only legalized in Brazil in the late 1970s, and represented a final dissolution of marriage while allowing both parties to retain certain property rights and the right to remarry.<sup>563</sup>

After World War II, concern about the dangers that modernity brought to young women’s sexual integrity led some legislators, intellectuals, politicians, and even

<sup>562</sup>Bassanezi, Carla. “Mulheres dos Anos Dourados.” In *Historia das Mulheres no Brasil*. Ed. Mary Del Priore, 607-639, Ed. Contexto, 1997, p.609.

<sup>563</sup>D’Incao, Maria Angela. *Amor e Familia no Brasil*. Ed. Contexto, 1989.

conservative feminists to push for formal sexual education in schools, a campaign that would not succeed until the 1970s. Through the 1950s, public discussion remained cloaked; even periodicals directed at a female membership avoided words such as “sex” or “intercourse,” instead opting for euphemisms such as “intimacy” and “physical familiarity.” Because of this general reluctance in openly addressing sexuality, middle and upper class girls learned about sex through shared secrets, forbidden literature, or just through experimentation, which often ended in emotional trauma and unwanted pregnancy. Many young women had little knowledge of or access to effective contraception. Birth control pills only became popularized in Brazil during the late 1960s, allowing sexually-active girls new flexibility in secretly obtaining birth control from friends, and using it without their parents’ knowledge.<sup>564</sup>

Another element of Brazil’s cultural transformation in the 1950s and 1960s was the concern with maintaining the ideals of femininity, especially among urban white families, even as those women followed more independent lifestyles. Advertisements promoted items, such as new cleaning products, that promised to help working women handle their prescribed domestic obligations while spending more time outside the house in paid employment. Magazines aimed at middle and upper-class consumers promoted goods that were supposed to make women look, feel, and smell more feminine. In Brazilian cities, perfumes, makeup and stockings were no longer luxury items but necessary products for every middle and upper class woman to assert her femininity.<sup>565</sup> Lower class working

---

<sup>564</sup>Prado, Joana Maria. “O Feminismo de Segunda Onda: Corpo, Prazer e Trabalho” In *Nova Historia das Mulheres no Brasil*. Ed. Carla Bassanezi Pinsky and Joana Maria Pedro, 238-259. Editora Contexto, 2012.

<sup>565</sup>Sant’anna, Denise Bernuzzi. “Corpo e Beleza: Sempre Bela” In *Nova Historia das Mulheres no Brasil*. Ed. Carla Bassanezi Pinsky and Joana Maria Pedro, 105-125. Editora Contexto, 2012.

women also absorbed those fashion trends and sometimes longed to share these appealing products, even if they lacked the monetary means to afford them.

In general, in spite of the prevailing conservative patriarchal traditions of the 1950s, Brazilian youth had more liberty than in previous generations. This was especially true in urban centers where society, the media, business, and consumers all followed foreign fashion and imitated new modern trends. However, even in major cities, the postwar period highlighted tensions and contradictions, especially regarding gender and sexuality. A conservative resistance to change warned against the dangers of influences from Hollywood and “rock and roll,” even as liberal families sought to include their children in modern life, and to acquaint them with new trends, technology and developments. The challenge for those families was how to balance modernity with traditional views of moral and sexual integrity. This was the reality that faced women migrating to Brasilia during its construction years: a constant struggle to assimilate into a frontier space and in a society that was wrestling with the postwar contradiction between modernity and traditional moral standards.

### **Women in Brasilia**

Brasilia during its construction years was a unique environment in which the lack of formal and pre-established social order allowed new arrivals the chance to renegotiate and reinvent their moral values and gendered relationships. Brazil’s future capital also represented modernity, which was evident not only in its new and bold architectural designs, but also in the many social interactions of a young population of migrants. Because the city was a massive construction site, and since it was portrayed as a professional and financial El Dorado, Brasilia attracted a young population of Brazilians. Those men and women,

migrating from diverse regions within the country, carried with them their dreams for the future, as well as their cultural regional baggage. When those elements interacted, a new concoction of social relationships appeared within an emerging urban center. However, in spite of its novel characteristics, Brasilia still reflected many of the country's old class, race, and gender preconceptions in a bizarre contradiction of modernity and conservative traditions.

The personal experiences and accounts of women who came to Brasilia during its construction period illustrate how important these questions of modern sexuality and gender roles were. More than that, the development of Brasilia's early gender and social structures provides an excellent illustration of Sueann Caulfield's claims that women from different races and classes within Brazil experienced morality and sexuality differently. We can see this lesson in the cases of individual women such as Eleonora Morandi Quadros and Suzana Conceição Mendonça, two migrants from opposite social classes and racial composition, who both arrived in Brasilia in search of adventure and better professional opportunities. Although these women worked in the same city, they lived dissimilar lives, and experienced gender, race, and class prejudice differently.

Eleonora Morandi Quadros was born in 1931, in the state of Minas Gerais. Her grandfather was an architect who worked on the construction of many buildings in Belo Horizonte, the state's capital city. Her family later moved to Rio de Janeiro, where she had the privilege of studying in a British school. In a 1989 interview, Quadros remembered that she had a happy childhood and liberal upbringing. Her parents were avid cinema-goers, and the liberal urban and well-off family went to the movies at least four times every week. It

was during the 1950s that the Brazilian elite intensified its love-hate relationship with imported novelties such as foreign movies, cultural trends, social practices, and fashion. Many of the more liberal-minded embraced cinema as a modern and desirable form of entertainment, although others rejected its influence.<sup>566</sup> Eleonora's father opened a construction company called M.M. Quadros in which her brother worked. After graduating high school, Eleonora decided she did not want to pursue a college degree, and instead opted for an administrative position in the family company.

When work on Brasilia began, the government invited her family's company to help prepare the land for construction, an offer that Eleonora's uncle and her brother both readily accepted. Excited by the prospect of moving to a novel place, and by the opportunities that Brazil's historic moment held, Eleonora decided to join them. In Brasilia she worked in managerial tasks such as collecting payments, filing bills, and organizing the company's employee roll.

In her interview, Eleonora remembered how the act of traveling from Rio to the site of Brazil's future capital was an adventure in itself, entailing frequent stops in airports in remote locations of the Brazilian interior. The aerial view gave her a strong impression of how the country was developmentally fragmented, reinforcing the rhetoric behind the ideal of Brasilia, the hope that the creation of a new political center would bring greater territorial integration. When she finally landed in Brasilia, she was instantly covered in red dust, which coated the fancy designer dress that she wore. Upon arriving at her temporary lodgings,

---

<sup>566</sup>Bassanezi, Carla. "Mulheres dos Anos Dourados." In *Historia das Mulheres no Brasil*. Ed. Mary Del Priore, 607-639, Ed. Contexto, 1997.

Eleonora was initially shocked by the living conditions, especially by the lack of warm water.

The following day, she asked the driver that was assigned to her where she could find regular clothes, since she had not packed appropriately for Brasilia's dry climate, rugged terrain, and dusty soil. He answered that the only place where they sold clothes was in the Free City, but its stores only catered to working men. Immediately discarding urban elite feminine dress, Eleonora bought male pants, boots, and shirts, and wore them every day, together with lipstick and French perfume. Eleonora Quadros was a strong willed woman, raised liberally when compared to other elite women at the time, yet she was still proud of maintaining her femininity, a trend that was reinforced by advertisement campaigns aimed at recreating the feminine in the midst of emancipation and feminist demands. When accused of being too masculine, she readily retorted that "I have no masculinity,"<sup>567</sup> and quickly added that strong women could still be feminine and honorable. Eleonora openly focused on maintaining her femininity while living in a masculine frontier space, and accordingly, the many men who worked directly with her during Brasilia's construction gave her the nickname of "the belle of Brasilia."<sup>568</sup>

Within the setting of Brasilia, Eleonora gradually gained better social and political status, and Brasilia's emerging political elite commonly invited her to ceremonies and parties. She was also well respected by men of all classes, and in her recollections she remembered that she was never sexually harassed. Although she was never badgered, she

---

<sup>567</sup>Quadros, Eleonora. *Depoimento – Programa de Historia Oral*. Brasilia. Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal, 1989, p.17.

<sup>568</sup>In her oral interview she proudly recalled how she struggled to maintain her sense of femininity and of how it was rewarding to know that construction workers referred to her in such a positive way, and how they often joked that they knew she was coming to visit by her unique perfume, which supposedly preceded her arrival.

also remembered how men stopped and stared at her whenever she went to the Free City. However, when considering who, and what she represented, it is not surprising that her presence caused such commotion among the male population of workers. Eleonora was a beautiful, young, white woman dressed in men's clothes who circulated freely and unaccompanied in the public sphere of a male dominated frontier space. She was also an authority figure for many of the workers, since she was well known among the lower working class as the supervisor for the firm of M.M. Quadro. The new capital's group of technocrats, engineers, and their wives also considered Eleonora a woman ahead of her time.

Finally, in her reminiscences, Eleonora Quadros mentioned that Brasilia represented an opportunity of personal and professional growth, which empowered her by giving her a sense of opportunity to participate in forming Brazil's future capital. Nonetheless, in spite of her modern ways, Eleonora still answered to more traditional roles of femininity. Reflecting Brazil's often contradictory gender identities, she chose to abandon the work force once she got married. In her words, it would not be "proper" to work after marriage, and she preferred to focus on her new domestic role. Ultimately Eleonora represented the unique feminism of Brazil's social elite, which incorporated new ideals and gender roles into a pre-established patriarchal system.

Most women in Brasilia, especially from the middle and upper classes, shared that sense of empowerment that Eleonora Quadros experienced upon moving to the frontier city. Alice Andrade Maciel, a nurse who arrived in Brasilia in 1958, later recalled that "there [Brasilia] I learned how to be independent, how to be a woman who could express herself in the social and political [spheres]...among entrepreneurs and politicians that were in

Brasilia...I could approach them and demand certain rights for their employees.”<sup>569</sup> Likewise, Maria Victoria Moreira Caldas,<sup>570</sup> who moved to Brasilia in 1957 from Minas Gerais, also experienced a feeling of empowerment and liberation. She came from a prosperous family with strong political connections, and her father was invited by Kubitschek’s government to join the team of engineers and bureaucrats that would head the construction project. After settling into a temporary house, her father summoned his wife and children, and so Maria arrived in Brasilia as an educated lady in her early twenties, eager to live a new adventure and to make a career for herself.

Initially, Maria Victoria wanted to work as a school teacher, but at the time, Brasilia still lacked an official school system. Accordingly, she was forced to accept the offer to work as the personal secretary of Israel Pinheiro, one of Kubitschek’s close friends and supporters, and the leader of the construction task-force. Pinheiro was both a politician and an engineer, and as head of construction, he had a permanent office in Brasilia, where he received foreign dignitaries and celebrities touring the future capital.<sup>571</sup> Because of her proximity to the city’s political elite, and since her job included welcoming visitors who were invited to see Brasilia, Maria Victoria felt the need to maintain a traditional feminine and secretarial composure. Therefore, she made monthly trips to Belo Horizonte to buy the latest in women’s fashion, makeup, and other luxury items. Despite the constant dust and dry climate of Brasilia, she insisted on wearing such upscale clothing daily, which reinforced both her femininity and her social status within the frontier society.

---

<sup>569</sup>Alice Andrade Maciel interviewed in the DVD *Poeira e Batom, 50 Mulheres na Construcao de Brasilia*. Project by Tania Fontenele Mourao.

<sup>570</sup>Caldas, Maria Victoria Moreira. *Depoimento – Programa de Historia Oral*. Brasilia. Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal, 1989. 23 p.

<sup>571</sup>Tamanini, L. *Brasília : memória da construção*. 2nd ed. Brasília DF: Projecto Editorial, 2003.



Maria Victoria's experiences shed an important light on the social life of Brasilia's young upper class women during the new city's earliest years. For this group, restaurants offered parties on weekends, and the political and social elite of neighboring towns organized formal balls. These social gatherings offered the opportunity for young men, such as engineers and administrative personnel, to meet young women of similar background and upbringing. However, since gender expectations in Brazilian society were often contradictory, many young middle class and elite girls were forbidden to attend such parties. Maria Victoria remembered how she could only go to those events if she was accompanied by an older colleague. Far from being an exception, such tight control over unmarried women was still customary for many respectable "family girls" who arrived in Brasilia with their families. Social tradition carried over from earlier decades of urban life stipulated that young, middle and upper class single women should be publicly chaperoned by male relatives, or at least older female family members.<sup>572</sup> Migrants transplanted this custom to Brasilia, and adapted those standards to fit the new city's social structure. Since most of Brasilia's population was young, there were relatively few women of advanced age around; accordingly, being chaperoned by a woman in her forties or even in her thirties, especially if she was a married woman, sufficed as moral protection. When parents allowed these "family girls" to attend Brasilia's parties, the young women sat at one end of the ballroom and patiently waited for the nervous young men standing at the other end to approach them and ask them to dance. Meanwhile, mothers and chaperones seated alongside the girls' section watched closely, carefully protecting the vulnerable female sexual honor. The narrative of those early parties in Brasilia and in its surrounding towns reflects the contradiction between

---

<sup>572</sup> D'Incao, Maria Angela. *Amor e Familia no Brasil*. Ed. Contexto, 1989.

modernity and tradition. While the young generation relished the opportunity of dancing to modern music,<sup>573</sup> they still had to abide by conservative moral regulations.

In later life, Maria specifically remembered the 1957 Spring Ball, organized in the neighboring city of Planaltina. She attended the party with her parents' older female friend and there she was chosen Queen of the Ball. Embarrassed, she accepted the crown but, once she arrived home, found herself in a difficult situation. Her father was appalled by his daughter's appointment as a local beauty queen, and she was temporarily banned from future parties. However, she soon regained her relative independence. Together with other young elite girls in Brasília, Maria tried to organize events in the new city that parents would consider socially and morally respectable and that the younger generation would consider desirable entertainment. Hampering her efforts to host such events, the neighboring towns' upper classes were still quite conservative. Few families allowed their girls to go to festivities in Brasília, since it was still considered a wild, male dominated frontier space that represented a real threat to a girl's moral and sexual integrity.<sup>574</sup>

This tendency is also explained by the clear regional disparity in customs. According to Maria Victoria, the neighboring towns of the state of Goiás had more conservative social regulations than other bigger urban centers of the Southeastern region. Illustrating that point, she described how she attended a party in neighboring Planaltina, wearing a new thin-strapped dress which she had recently bought in Belo Horizonte. In that more cosmopolitan

---

<sup>573</sup>According to some migrants who arrived in Brasília during its construction period, the type of parties and the music selection allowed at such events varied, and while at most gatherings modern songs were played at others, the organization often refrained from playing fast-paced Rock and Roll, deemed sensual and morally depraved.

<sup>574</sup>Mourão, Tania Fontenele; Oliveira, Monica Ferreira Gaspar *Poeira e Batom no Planalto Central: 50 Mulheres na Construção de Brasília*. Athalaia Grafica e Editora, 2010.

environment, her style represented the latest fashion, but for mothers and the middle and upper classes of Planaltina, it was too liberal and sensual. After walking into the ballroom, Maria Victoria quickly noticed that mothers were pushing their daughters away from her, while young men seemed mesmerized and intrigued by her appearance. She felt out of place and left early, realizing that the dress was too much for that small, conservative community to handle. Respectable girls from that region usually wore dresses with long sleeves, with rich and elaborate embroidery, with fabric covering the girls at least to their elbows and well below their knees, Maria Victoria recalled.<sup>575</sup>

Brasília's social scene evolved, as construction continued. In 1958, the government built a new and more luxurious hotel, called the Brasília Palace Hotel, to lodge important visitors.<sup>576</sup> The capital's emerging elite soon began holding its celebrations and balls there, events that often drew famous national singers and artists to the frontier city. Kubitschek also attended such events, which made them more noteworthy and respectable. However, even though elite members of neighboring towns now wanted to attend those social gatherings, invitations were limited, and soon Brasília's upper class became increasingly selective. At the Brasília Palace Hotel, parties often lasted until six in the morning, and the elite girls who were invited to attend were usually allowed to stay so long as older chaperones were also present.<sup>577</sup> Such habits reflected the mixture of conservative and liberal ideas that constituted Brasília's middle and upper class customs. It also sheds light on the

---

<sup>575</sup>Caldas, Maria Victoria Moreira. *Depoimento – Programa de Historia Oral*. Brasília. Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal, 1989. 23 p.

<sup>576</sup>Tamanini, L. *Brasília : memória da construção*. 2nd ed. Brasília DF: Projecto Editorial, 2003.

<sup>577</sup>It is important to note that in the narrative of Brasília's construction, the social practice of chaperonage varied from other regions. Since the majority of the population in Brasília was relatively young, a thirty or forty year old woman was considered a suitable older chaperone. For more details about the demographics of Brasília's initial population see: Ribeiro, Gustavo Lins. *A Capital da Esperança: A Experiencia dos Trabalhadores na Construcao de Brasilia*. Editora UnB, 2008.

challenges of creating a balanced moral standard in a society that struggled with finding its own identity; one built from the different regional and class traditions, with different expectations towards modernity and gender roles.

Women also experienced the frontier society differently according to the original fashion in which they arrived in the city. Many middle and upper class single women moved to Brasilia with their fathers, most of whom were engineers, merchants, politicians and managers. For those girls with a strong family base, gender roles and social expectations differed from those who came to the future city either alone or with other single young friends in search of employment opportunities. This was the case of Braulina Mendes de Carvalho, who arrived in 1957, and Zeni Moureira, who arrived in 1959. Both women worked as Novacap's administrative staff members. They remembered how Brasilia pulsed with the energy of productive youth, and how girls went to parties and dances, often riding with fellow male co-workers who either owned cars or drove Novacap vehicles. Their male chaperones also served the purpose of protecting them, guaranteeing that they returned safely to their lodgings. Those interactions were very different from what Maria Victoria experienced, the limits she faced due to living under her parents' tutelage, while the young women who migrated to Brasilia alone had far more opportunity to distance themselves from the strict and more conservative expectations of family structure.<sup>578</sup>

For those independent young ladies venturing into the frontier city without constant family surveillance, the geographic distance between Brasilia and their original homes meant greater freedom and empowerment. Brasilia was essentially an environment of young

---

<sup>578</sup>All interviews are found in the DVD *Poeira e Batom, 50 Mulheres na Construção de Brasília*. Project by Tania Fontenele Mourao.

people who felt excited by the prospect of building the nation's future, but also by the possibility of constructing a career, family life, and future for themselves. For many, it also represented a chance to experience life without the traditional restraints of either city or country life. For middle and upper class workers, leisure also meant camping trips to surrounding waterfalls, and parties with alcohol, young men playing guitars, and girls socializing. It was definitely a period of fast-paced hard work, but it was also, for these youths, a moment of empowering freedom.

Another self-identified “pioneer” was Therezinha de Jesus, who left her parents’ house in 1960, in search of adventure and personal growth.<sup>579</sup> Therezinha was a middle class girl who benefitted from access to education and professional training in pedagogy. Like many other young women who arrived in the city in its inauguration year, she sought employment as a teacher in Brasilia’s new public school system, which was rapidly growing during the city’s final construction stage. Attracted by the promise of financial gain and professional opportunities, most female teachers arrived either in 1959 or 1960, a period in which Brasilia was no longer considered a pipe dream and a wild frontier.<sup>580</sup> Especially in its inauguration year, it was seen as the manifestation of Brazil’s natural greatness, as the realization of a national dream that represented modernity and progress. In that sense, these ladies were also participants in the mission of national construction, and this symbolic role justified their move from their hometowns, where they still lived under the guidance and protection of family life and structure. Thus, through national discourse, young women

---

<sup>579</sup>In her filmed testimony she does not mention where she was originally from, but comments that she migrated to Brasilia, thus we know that her family resided elsewhere. Interview found in the DVD *Poeira e Batom, 50 Mulheres na Construção de Brasília*. Project by Tania Fontenele Mourao.

<sup>580</sup>Ribeiro, Gustavo Lins. *A Capital da Esperança: A Experiencia dos Trabalhadores na Construção de Brasília*. Editora UnB, 2008.

found a practical way of ensuring greater financial, and consequently moral, emancipation within a still strict patriarchal society.

Maria Marta Cintra, who arrived in Brasilia on January 1960, from the northeastern state of Pernambuco, remembered that: “my mother used to say that every girl, from a [more humble class] had to be a teacher...and boys had to be doctors. So I said, ‘I hope there is an [application] process for Brasilia.’ She told me, ‘There is, I saw it in the news on Wednesday.’ That was January 1960. It was the best thing in my life... being a teacher in Brasilia.”<sup>581</sup> Maria Marta’s testimony reveals the cultural expectations that surrounded the social aspirations of middle and even lower class families. The recreation of patriarchal relations discussed by Besse<sup>582</sup> resulted in the strengthening of Brazil’s gendered division of labor which assumed that women were naturally inclined to specific services such as teaching, nursing, and secretarial jobs, while men were allowed, and expected, to aim for higher standards. This conservative mentality drove many young women to invest in a teaching career in Brasilia, a move that ironically also led them to challenge some of the authority behind patriarchy. Especially in the post-inauguration years, ideas of feminist emancipation in Brasilia gained greater importance. Women argued that if they were strong enough to shoulder the burdens of building a new and modern nation, then they should be entitled to greater political, economic, moral, and cultural rights, similar to their male counterparts.

---

<sup>581</sup>Mourao, Tania Fontenele; Oliveira, Monica Ferreira Gaspar *Poeira e Batom no Planalto Central: 50 Mulheres na Construção de Brasília*. Athalaia Grafica e Editora, 2010, p.49.

<sup>582</sup>Besse, Susan K. *Restructuring Patriarchy: The Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil, 1914-1940*. The University of North Carolina Press, 1996.

As a young teacher in Brasília, Therezinha de Jesus experienced this sense of empowerment; reflecting in later life, she spoke about women as men's true partners, and maintained that the capital's construction was only possible because men, of all races and classes, had either the direct or indirect support of their wives, mothers, or daughters. Another pioneer, Maria Moura, who also worked as a teacher in Brasília during its formative years, similarly emphasized that the thousands of *candangos* who remained in the city without their families recognized the importance of women's roles in helping their fellow married and accompanied workers cope with the hardships of frontier life. Thus it was from necessity that the partnership between men and women intensified during Brasília's early years. Within the conditions of a society that was shaped by daily pressure and outside of formal legal and cultural establishments, women gained greater freedom in both the domestic and public spheres.<sup>583</sup>

Reality, however, was significantly different for women of lower classes, many of whom migrated to Brasília accompanying their husbands, or alone, in search of a better financial life. While those reasons for coming to Brasília were similar to the motivations of middle and upper class women, poorer women's experiences within the frontier city differed greatly. Lower class women arriving at the site of Brazil's future capital faced the double challenge of establishing adequate lodging and finding work. While their husbands or partners easily found employment as construction workers, even if lacking skills or special training, there was no place for unskilled and uneducated women within the administrative body of Novacap. Therefore, they were compelled to work in the informal service sector as

---

<sup>583</sup>Both testimonies of Therezinha de Jesus and Maria Moura are found in the DVD *Poeira e Batom, 50 Mulheres na Construção de Brasília*. Project by Tania Fontenele Mourao.

seamstresses, cooks, laundresses, vendors, midwives, unofficial nurse assistants, letter writers,<sup>584</sup> and domestic servants.

In spite of Brasília's self-representation as exemplifying progress and modernity, for poor women the capital's social structure reflected the country's traditional patriarchy and inequality, which kept them from fully benefitting from the advances achieved by middle and upper class feminists. Although Brasília did not offer women from the lower classes regulated employment opportunities, nonetheless it granted them greater physical mobility and relative moral leniency, due to the city's nature as an emerging urban center and society.

A case to illustrate this lower end of Brasília's social spectrum comes from the oral history of Suzana Conceição Mendonça, a poor, female migrant born in 1929, in the Northeastern state of Rio Grande do Norte. She was five years old when her family moved to Fortaleza, in the neighboring state of Ceará, and when she turned nine she was informally adopted by a wealthy family that took her to live with them in Rio de Janeiro. In her recollections, Suzana stated that her parents struggled with poverty, and in such cases it was not unusual to find poverty-stricken families sending their children, especially girls, to move in with middle and upper class families and perform domestic work. As anthropologist France Winddance Twine has explained, since these adoptions were not regulated, these lower class children were forced into a condition of exploitation that kept them from enjoying a happy childhood and exercising their legal rights to education.<sup>585</sup>

---

<sup>584</sup> Some of the few who could read and write offered to write, for a fee, letters for the *candangos* to send to their families in their hometowns.

<sup>585</sup> Twine, France Winddance. *Racism in a Racial Democracy; the Maintenance of White Supremacy in Brazil*. Rutgers University Press, 2000.



In her research, Twine described this system of informal adoption as a “common practice for Afro-Brazilian children to be adopted by middle and upper class Brazilian families to be raised as live-in servants until they marry or run away...which [emphasizes the assumption that] black children are ideally suited for menial labor rather than education.”<sup>586</sup> As a background for poor girls, Suzana’s experiences fit into this picture well; she recalled that “the [family] that took me from my mother never let me study because they had many children and I had to take care of them...so I never even learned how to read.”<sup>587</sup> While Twine focused on the racial elements of this practice, evidence suggests that class and family background also played important roles in an elite family’s decision to take a child under such an informal contract of servitude. Usually the adoptive families truly believed that they were helping out needy families, rather than creating impediments for poor children’s future education and financial growth.<sup>588</sup> But many of these poor children experienced hardships such as those of Suzana, who lost contact with her birth family until she turned fourteen, and she remembered how her parents suffered without knowing what had happened to her throughout the years.<sup>589</sup>

---

<sup>586</sup>Ibid, p. 37. See also Rizzini, Irma. “Pequenos Trabalhadores do Brasil” In *Historia das Crianças no Brasil*. Org. Mary Del Priore, 376-406, Ed. Contexto, 1999.

<sup>587</sup>Mendonça, Suzana Conceição. *Depoimento – Programa de Historia Oral*. Brasília. Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal, 1990, p.6.

<sup>588</sup> Often, wealthy family members approached poor families whom they encountered on the streets or in their daily lives, and suggested the arrangement of an informal adoption. In other cases, poor children’s parents approached prominent members of a community’s upper social class and offered a child’s services. In both ways, there was no legal commitment to the child’s moral, education, and even financial upbringing, and the lack of regulation led to many cases of child labor and sexual exploitation. It was only in the 1990s that the Brazilian government began a campaign to regulate adoptions, and since then the state has focused on reducing sexual trafficking, exploitation, and crimes against both women and children. For more information on this topic see: Fonseca, Claudia. “Inequality Near and Far: Adoption as Seen from the Brazilian Favelas” In *Law and Society Review*, Vol. 36, No. 2, Special Issue on Nonbiological Parenting (2002), pp.397-432.

<sup>589</sup>In her interview Suzana does not explain why it took her five years to finally contact her family, but she mentions that they were not informed of her whereabouts, and that it was only years later that she was finally able to physically reunite with some of her family members, although she does not mention how old she was when this happened.

Suzana's personal story is one of perseverance and endurance. Years after her informal adoption, the wealthy family who employed her died in a plane crash. Following the tragedy, she was taken in by another couple who owned a small hotel in which she worked as a cleaning lady. She stayed there until she turned eighteen years old, and by then she already had her first child. Significantly, she left Rio to escape personal danger, following an attack by a drunk partner. Like many poor, black women in Brazil during the mid-1900s, Suzana failed to legally marry. After her consensual partner attacked her, Suzana retaliated and badly injured him, which led the police to take her off to jail. However, her employers bailed her out, and arranged for her to move to Brasilia, a city where she could easily vanish and never found.<sup>590</sup>

So, in 1958, Suzana arrived in the frontier city with her two-month old baby, some loose change, and a reference letter to an inn located in the Free City. Following her employers' instructions, Suzana presented herself to the inn's owner, a recent widower who was depressed, alone, and desperate for help with his commercial enterprise, and with his young daughters who still required attention.<sup>591</sup> She worked for the man for almost a year, and then left the inn because she "married" a construction company driver, a decision she later deeply regretted. Together, they built a shack in the Vila Amaury settlement, located in the area destined for Brasilia's artificial lake.<sup>592</sup> According to Suzana's testimony, her husband disappeared shortly after that, saying that he was going to the neighboring town of

---

<sup>590</sup>Mendonca, Suzana Conceição. *Depoimento – Programa de Historia Oral*. Brasilia. Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal, 1990.

<sup>591</sup>Suzana never mentioned how many daughters nor how old they were, but from her testimony it is safe to infer that they were not infants, possibly toddlers and older. They were also not young adults.

<sup>592</sup>According to Lucio Costa's urban plan, Brasilia's layout included a man-made lake, named *Lago Paranoa*, or "Lake Paranoá." When construction on the city began, engineers determined which area would later be flooded by water from a dam that was also being built nearby in order to meet most of the city's water needs.

Goiania to look for business; he never returned. A few months later, an acquaintance told her that he was killed in a car accident, but she never asked for legal proof. In her interview, she mentioned how, years later, she started doubting if he was indeed dead or if he had found an easy way out of their relationship. Either way, she moved on and eventually found a third companion, with whom she had more than five children.

Suzana's romantic life reflected the lower classes' common practice of engaging in more than one informal relationship. The Brazilian elite considered such personal and sexual fluidity to be a sign of moral weakness, but for lower-class women and men, such behavior represented a harsh reality, the need to find creative strategies for improving their material life. Although poorer people generally did not need to worry about protecting property through matrimony, they still benefitted from forming relationships that could represent more income and physical protection.<sup>593</sup> Likewise, urban elites often perceived the freedom of the lower classes' consensual unions as proof of racial and classist inferiority and sexual depravity, without recognizing its connections to deeper issues of social inequality.<sup>594</sup>

As a poorer woman in Brasilia, Suzana did well by being constantly alert to possibilities for improving her situation. While her second husband was gone, she met a young woman who asked for lodging, explaining that she had worked as a domestic servant in the house of a Novacap employee (probably an engineer, technician, or administrative staff) but that the *patroa*<sup>595</sup> forced her to leave once the baby was born. Suzana agreed to

<sup>593</sup>Fussell, Elizabeth; Palloni, Alberto. "Persistent Marriage Regimes in Changing Times" In *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol. 66, No. 5, Special Issue: International Perspectives on Families and Social Change (Dec., 2004), pp. 1201-1213.

<sup>594</sup>Twine, France Winddance. *Racism in a Racial Democracy; the Maintenance of White Supremacy in Brazil*. Rutgers University Press, 2000.

<sup>595</sup>Portuguese term for "female boss," and normally used when referring to domestic service. In cases of regular middle class secretarial jobs the term used is *chefe*, or boss. *Patrao* or *patroa* are terms that usually carry negative connotations of inequality and authority, and are commonly used by domestic servants and

give the desperate woman temporary lodging, and soon they developed a friendship that translated into a business partnership. At the time, she worked as a *marmiteira*,<sup>596</sup> someone delivering prepared lunch and dinner boxes to construction workers who did not want to rely on the bad quality food of company diners. With her new partner, Suzana was able to sell meals to more workers; having a partner to help deliver lunch boxes also freed Suzana to take on new work such as laundry. Eventually, the friendship ended; although Suzana does not mention how the partnership was dissolved, common trends at the time suggest that probably the young girl either re-married or moved from the Vila Amaury to another, and perhaps more permanent, settlement. Such were the relationships and jobs in Brasilia during its construction years: fluid, mobile, and constantly changing.

Pregnant with another child, Suzana remained in the Vila Amaury area, even as authorities pressed for community members to leave their shacks because of the threat of upcoming flooding.<sup>597</sup> Defying government warnings, many inhabitants resisted relocation. Finally, the government forced them to move by knocking down shacks, at which point water was already seeping over the fields.<sup>598</sup> It was on such a day<sup>599</sup> that Suzana went into

---

lower class workers in reference to their employers. The latter also use this terminology as a way of establishing authority within the scope of informal service relationships. For more information on Brazil's domestic service sector see: Souza, Julia Filet-Abreu. "Paid Domestic Service in Brazil" In *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 7, No. 1, Brazil: Class Interests and the State, 1980, pp. 35-63.

<sup>596</sup> Means "vendor of prepared lunch or dinner." It is another informal service that is still practiced today in many Brazilian cities. *Marmiteiras* cook their food at home, then place them in boxes and set out to deliver them to pre-established clients.

<sup>597</sup> Once again, it is difficult to infer exact dates and the numbers of pregnancies since Suzana does not mention exact numbers and since her testimony often shifts thematically and chronologically. It is important to remember that the many men and women interviewed by members of the Public Archives were elders, which made the act of remembering facts with precision harder.

<sup>598</sup>Ribeiro, Gustavo Lins. *A Capital da Esperanca: A Experiencia dos Trabalhadores na Construção de Brasília*. Editora UnB, 2008.

<sup>599</sup>Suzana did not remember the exact date, but according to the dates that the government began slowly flooding the area we can deduce that it happened between the months of September and early November of 1959. However, even before the government forced residents out some people started looking for houses in other settlements, or even in the newly created satellite cities. When a new residence was found they often either abandoned their shacks entirely, or tore them down to reuse or sell some of the wooden planks. For

labor<sup>600</sup> as Novacap agents and police forces tried to evacuate the area. After those authorities failed to help her, she could not get to one of Brasilia's two existing hospitals. Instead, a neighbor sent her to an abandoned shack located out of the immediate evacuation zone. There, Suzana hung a rope on the door and used that to hold on to while she delivered her baby alone. After the child was born, the man who had sent her arrived with a community midwife, who helped cut the baby's cord. Suzana was able to stay in that shack for a couple of weeks, but soon time came to evacuate that area, and so she had to leave.

After leaving Vila Amaury, she wandered around and ended up camping in the wilderness by a small source of water, where she lived for approximately thirty days. There, she washed clothes for money, a service she had performed earlier to earn a living, even though it required her to violate strict gender rules. During her stay in the Vila Amaury, Suzana had to steal water from construction camps in order to wash workers' clothes. Since women were not allowed in those areas, she hid her gender by dressing as a regular male worker whenever she entered the camps to fill her buckets of water. Later, Suzana recalled that while no one realized that it was a woman underneath the bulky overall and dirty straw hat, she was normally taunted by other men who referred to her as an "old worker" or "old negro".<sup>601</sup>

After moving into her makeshift camp out in the wilderness, Suzana at least found a fixed water source that was useful for her to survive and to continue earning some money.

---

more information see: Ribeiro, Gustavo Lins. *A Capital da Esperanca: A Experiencia dos Trabalhadores na Construcao de Brasilia*. Editora UnB, 2008. And Tamanini, L. *Brasília : memória da construção*. 2nd ed. Brasília DF: Projecto Editorial, 2003.

<sup>600</sup>Suzana never specified which pregnancy this was, only that she had fourteen pregnancies total, with seven of them resulting in still births.

<sup>601</sup>Mendonca, Suzana Conceição. *Depoimento – Programa de Historia Oral*. Brasilia. Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal, 1990.

But even in her remote shack, she often had to hide because *candangos*, riding by on trucks towards the construction sites, frequently taunted her. Accusing her of being a “low-life slut,” those men shouted out obscenities and claimed that she was hiding in the wilderness because that was where she took her alleged clients. This moral judgment reflected the unspoken norms of social order, referring to the idea that prostitutes working in specific prostitution zones were more respectable than women who might practice what sociologists called “complementary prostitution.”<sup>602</sup> Therefore, for Suzana, living by herself in the wilderness meant physical danger and moral vilification, and the need to constantly justify her presence in a frontier society that valued masculine adventurous spirit over female independence and resilience. Finally, one day she ran into a priest who decided to help her find a shack in a new settlement. She then moved into her new home and was eventually able to legally own that plot of land.<sup>603</sup>

Suzana’s story is definitely impressive in its inclusion of issues such as social marginalization, gender and racial discrimination, and sheer survival skills. Her consensual unions reflected the family structure of the lower classes, and her menial and informal jobs also represented the only alternative for women in her conditions. Her testimony also sheds light on the different relationships between Brasilia’s emerging classes as well as the dynamics of gender relations and expectations. It also reflects the background shared by many women who migrated to Brasilia from the country’s Northeast.

---

<sup>602</sup>Figueiredo, Luciano. “Mulheres nas Minas Gerais” In *Historia das Mulheres no Brasil*. Ed. Mary Del Priore, 578-638, Ed. Contexto, 1997.

<sup>603</sup>In her interview she did not recall where the new house was located, nor those she fully explain how this crucial change in her life happened.

Joana Dantas, who became one of Kubitschek's domestic servants in Brasilia in the late 1950s, shared Suzana's origins. Joana recalled being sold by her mother, who had previously been a slave in a farm of Brazil's *nordeste*. According to Joana, her mother was set up to marry a farm *jagunço*<sup>604</sup> when she decided to elope with another man. In Joana's recollection of her last serious conversation with her mother, she asked "Mom was he [father] ugly? Was he black?"<sup>605</sup> Her mother answered that yes, he was black, and that he ended up abandoning mother and child. Soon after this conversation, men from Rio de Janeiro approached her mother and asked to "buy" Joana and have her work as a domestic servant.<sup>606</sup> Since the practice was common and her mother believed that her daughter might benefit from a better life, she accepted, and so Joana was taken, never to return or to encounter her mother again. It was only in Rio de Janeiro, working with the new family, that Joana was finally registered as a legal Brazilian citizen, and was given an estimated birth date of April, 1901. She also recalled not having a real name, and she was the one who chose the identity of "Joana Dantas" when she arrived in Rio de Janeiro. Back then, this lack of a formal name was also common among the lower classes of Brazil's *nordeste*; there, children were simply called *menino*, boy, or *menino femea*, female boy.<sup>607</sup>

---

<sup>604</sup>These were men hired by rich plantation owners to work as private army or security guard. Some of the tasks that they were expected to execute included capturing runaway slaves, and maintain order among the working class and in the region, even if order was achieved through violence and force. For more information see: Freyre, Gilberto. *The Masters and the Slaves: a Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization*. University of California Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1987. And Costa, Emilia Viotti da. *The Brazilian Empire Myths and Histories*. The University of Chicago Press, 1985.

<sup>605</sup> Dantas, Joana. *Depoimento – Programa de Historia Oral*. Brasilia. Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal, 2005, p.2.

<sup>606</sup>It is unclear whether she was bought or simply taken with the promise of being offered a better life, but Joana uses the term "bought" in her interview.

<sup>607</sup>Freyre, Gilberto. *The Masters and the Slaves: a Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization*. University of California Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1987. For more on the lives of women from the Brazilian northeast see: Falci, Miridan Knox. "Mulheres do Sertao Nordestino" In *Historia das Mulheres no Brasil*. Ed. Mary Del Priore, 241-277, Ed. Contexto, 1997.

While working as a domestic in Rio de Janeiro in the 1940s and mid-1950s, Joana was not allowed to mingle with house guests or even look directly at them because, in her words, she was a poor, black woman. She also recalled several incidences of sexual abuse by men who expected her to fulfill their natural desires since her skin tone and social status led them to consider her a servant, rather than a respectable “family girl.” For reasons left unclear, Joana decided to leave for Brasilia and arrived possibly in 1958.<sup>608</sup> There, she initially worked as a food vendor and as a cleaning lady, and was later hired by well-off political families to work as a domestic servant. Eventually, President Kubitschek himself employed Joana, who remained with the family well into the 1970s. As an elderly woman, Joana remembered her years with the Kubitschek family fondly. She was proud of being able to offer domestic advice to Kubitschek’s wife, Sara; when the family faced an infestation of bed bugs and Sara had no idea how to get rid of them, Joana brought tobacco leaves from the Free City to place under the mattress and drive away the bugs. This episode and other similar stories reveal the often intimate relationship between domestics and their *patroas*, and how the latter relied on their workers for practical advice and homemade, natural remedies.<sup>609</sup>

Another Northeasterner who moved to Brasilia was Else Pereira Haine, born in July 13<sup>th</sup>, 1933, in the state of Bahia. In contrast to the lower-class origins of Suzana and Joana, as well as Eleonora’s elite upbringing, Else was born into a lower middle class family who ran a small grocery store in their village. Out of seven children, only the boys were allowed to go to the state’s capital, Salvador, to study, as Else recalled:

<sup>608</sup>Joana Dantas’ testimony is very confusing and, probably due to her advanced age, she could not specifically recall dates and correct sequence of events.

<sup>609</sup>Lewin, Linda. “Some Historical Implications of Kinship Organization for Family-Based Politics in the Brazilian Northeast” In *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Apr. 1979) pp. 262-292.



In the interior of Bahia daughters were taught to sew and cook; those things that make a good housewife...because times were tough [my dad] had to choose two children to go study in the capital...he chose my oldest and my youngest brothers.<sup>610</sup>

After her father learned about Brasilia, he decided to move the entire family to the site of Brazil's future capital. Moving into the Free City, he opened a small grocery store where the female family members worked while the boys sought employment in other areas, including construction work. The decision to relocate to Brasilia proved to be life changing for Else; her family enjoyed greater financial opportunities in the new capital.

Again, class, race, and geographic origin all made crucial differences for women. While Else and Suzana shared a similar regional background from the *nordeste*, the two experienced radically different lives in Brasilia, marked by their different social settings. While Else gained greater visibility within the emerging society due to her family's lower-middle-class means and to their shared business endeavors in the Free City, Suzana remained practically invisible to the state and its representatives, and relied on her own skills and on the informal service sector to survive in the frontier city.

### **Sex, Masculinity, and Violence in the Frontier City**

In the setting of Brasilia during its construction years, women from different social and racial backgrounds experienced sexual harassment, professional opportunities, and empowerment in different ways. Likewise, men from different groups also exerted their

---

<sup>610</sup>Haine, Else Pereira. *Depoimento – Programa de Historia Oral*. Brasilia. Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal, 2000, p.5.

masculinity in ways that reflected their social classes and status within that emerging society. Some of the first elements that distinguished women according to class were sexual freedom and sexual harassment. Women from the upper class remembered, in later oral-history interviews, that they felt respected by their male coworkers and by the *candangos* in general. Many of those women even asserted that there were no sexual crimes committed in Brasilia during its construction years, a claim which an analysis of contemporary police reports clearly shows to be incorrect.

The fact that many upper-class women failed to remember cases of sexual harassment and crimes during this period indicates that they were partially isolated from the harsh reality that lower-class women faced in the frontier environment of Brasilia, as well as the general tendency of suppressing negative memories in order to maintain the psychological feeling of Brasilia as a frontier democracy and ideal society. Historian James Holston defends that most of the *candangos* exercised a sort of selective memory that served the purpose of keeping their pride in participating in Brasilia's construction intact.<sup>611</sup> Lower class and non-white women, on the other hand, remembered having to walk in groups in order to protect themselves from unwanted sexual advances. The radical differences between these different women's accounts clearly demonstrate how race, class, and gender influenced how immigrants experienced the emerging urban center, or at least how these women chose to remember and describe their experiences decades later.

An examination of Brasilia's police reports from 1957 to 1958 provides documentary evidence of gender, race, class, and crime, although analysis is complicated by the absence

---

<sup>611</sup>Holston, James. *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. 1st ed. University Of Chicago Press, 1989.

of a standardized recording procedure. The officer or worker on call typically wrote out reports by hand, often including personal opinions about who was guilty and what penalties should be applied. Because Brasilia was under construction, important cases were sent to established courts in neighboring counties. However, more often than not, officers exerted their local power by either persuading victims not to pursue cases legally, or reprimanded and sentenced defendants based on primary investigations and their own judgments. Usually there were no trials, but the presence of the local guard, or GEB, was normally enough to maintain order and respect within the frontier society. This informal legal structure clearly represented an improvised manner of maintaining order in a frontier space. Authorities in early Brasilia had the option of issuing many different penalties, of which the most severe was imprisonment in neighboring cities' county jails. But the most common sentence was "deportation," meaning that the person was banned from Brasilia, under threat of being imprisoned if returned and caught.<sup>612</sup>

Police records show specific instances of sexual harassment and the varied responses from authorities, often depending at least in part on the position of the woman demanding action. In one example,<sup>613</sup> on November 22, 1957, Alzira Alves de Vasconcelos, a married Novacap worker, filed an official complaint against a man who allegedly harassed her with sexual propositions that made her extremely uncomfortable. Along with her husband, she had tried to discourage the man's advances, but he would not stop, so she turned to legal action. As a response, the police summoned the accused and threatened him with "deportation." Alzira's case was clearly colored by her formal position in Brasilia as a

<sup>612</sup>Ribeiro, Gustavo Lins. *A Capital da Esperança: A Experiencia dos Trabalhadores na Construção de Brasília*. Editora UnB, 2008.

<sup>613</sup>Fundo Novacap, Code D.10.01, 1957-1960. Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal (Public Archives of the Federal District), Brasilia- DF, Brazil.

Novacap employee, who belonged to a higher class in the city, and who had the moral support and authority of her husband. Those factors influenced how the authorities interpreted her accusations, taking her seriously and taking immediate legal steps against the perpetrator.<sup>614</sup>

The distinctive nature of the police reaction in Alzira's case is highlighted by a comparison with other cases from the same era. On November 28, 1957, construction worker Ricardo Borges reported that his wife claimed to be routinely harassed by one of his coworkers. Borges stated that whenever he left for work, the man went to his house and made sexual advances to his wife, who supposedly tried to resist. There is no evidence that the police ever heard the wife's testimony, and there was no official closure to the case other than the officer's personal opinion that this was a case of hidden adultery. A similar lack of response appeared in a case from December 9, 1957, when a man reported that two *candangos* invaded his shack and tried to rape his wife. Nothing more was said about the case, and the absence of even an informal follow up indicates that their allegations were either dropped, or not taken seriously by the local authorities.<sup>615</sup>

The following year, on January 5, 1958, a man was arrested for breaking into a house, and for having sexual intercourse with the family's underage daughter.<sup>616</sup> The perpetrator was sent to jail, but later released after threats of future deportation. Nothing else was said about the case, and it is difficult to judge whether this was a case of rape or of

---

<sup>614</sup>Fundo Novacap, Code D.10.01, 1957.

<sup>615</sup>Fundo Novacap, Code D.10.01, 1957.

<sup>616</sup>Brazil's Penal Code from 1940 stipulated that the category of "underage" referred to children under the age of eighteen. Gadelha, Sylvio de Sousa. *Subjetividade e menor-idade. Acompanhamento e o dever dos profissionais do social*. Editora Annablume, 1998. And Priore, Mary Del. *Historia das Crianças no BRasil*. Editora Contexto, 2010.

a family seeking justice for what they considered sexual dishonor. Similarly, on January 21, 1958, a man simply termed as “the father” accused a member of the GEB, Brasília’s improvised special guard, of kidnapping and “deflowering” his underage daughter. The accused was located, after which both the family and the police officer in charge forced him to marry the girl.<sup>617</sup> This case demonstrates that the preoccupation with virginity and the appeal to legal resources on behalf of the victim, as described by Sueann Caulfield,<sup>618</sup> persisted well into the late 1950s, and was also transported to the frontier city of Brasília.

Another sexually-related case happened on February 23, 1958, when a woman was allegedly harassed by a man as she worked in her domestic tasks. When her husband returned, he pressed her to seek justice and protected his masculine honor by going to the police station and presenting a formal complaint, which resulted in the perpetrator’s final deportation. Although this case had closure, it sheds light on the legal dynamics of Brasília’s early years. Usually, when women sought police mediation and were accompanied by a father or a husband, authorities took those accusations seriously, which often resulted in formal reprimands against the accused. On the other hand, when the women involved were single, or went to the stations to file a complaint alone, their allegations tended not to lead to a definite outcome. To cite another such case from this period, one lower-class mother formally reported that she and her daughter had both been raped; after authorities caught the man, he received only a minor warning. The fact that such serious allegations resulted in a light sentence indicates that the victims’ lack of formal male representation and their social and possibly racial background decreased the validity and severity of their claims.<sup>619</sup>

<sup>617</sup>Reference for both cases: Fundo Novacap, Code D.10.01, 1958.

<sup>618</sup>Caulfield, Sueann. *In Defense of Honor. Sexual Morality, Modernity, and Nation in Early Twentieth-Century Brazil*. Duke University Press, 2000.

<sup>619</sup> Fundo Novacap, Code D.10.01, 1958.

Finally, a last case referring to expected gender roles warrants special consideration. On March 13, 1958, a worker called Euclides Gomes was arrested for the attempted murder of his wife and her alleged lover. Euclides was taken into custody, but after a quick investigation, authorities discovered that his wife had sexual relations with the other man, which the culture took to justify Euclides' violent outbreak. He was released, and the wife was punished with deportation. Nothing was said about the lover, and guilt lay entirely on the shoulders of the allegedly sexually promiscuous woman. This incident introduces a new element to the discussion of gender roles and expectations: masculinity. Because his honor was tainted by his wife's extra-marital affair, Euclides Gomes was justified in reacting violently. Therefore, his aggression was socially expected and deemed a natural and valid punishment that was required to maintain order within the patriarchal system of consensual unions and marriages.<sup>620</sup>

As in the case of Euclides Gomes's wife, some women in Brasilia during its construction years faced domestic violence, as well as unwarranted sexual advances and gender discrimination. On December 15, 1957, the sons of female worker Idalina Alves da Silva filed a formal complaint against their father, accusing him of routinely beating their mother. The officer summoned the man to an informal hearing and issued a formal warning with the threat of deportation if he repeated the act. At least until December of 1958, there was no other record of Idalina's physical abuse. However, this does not suffice as evidence of the police's effectiveness, since many things could have happened to Idalina and her family, including the intensification of violence and greater threats made by her husband

---

<sup>620</sup> Ibid.

against herself and her children if another complaint was made.<sup>621</sup> Likewise, on December 20, 1957, a lady called Rita Diniz Souza complained that her husband often abused her and, once, after arriving drunk from a party, attacked her with scissors. Her injuries were minor, and she insisted that she only wanted the police to threaten him with deportation so that he could return home and treat her in a better manner. Like many abused women, she did not want him to leave, nor did she intend to have him sentenced to jail.<sup>622</sup>

Another example of unresolved domestic violence was registered on February 23, 1958, when Neide Carretieri accused her husband of shooting at her. One of the shots grazed her head, and she walked into the police station still with an open and bleeding wound. The records show no follow up comments, and like Rita Diniz, Carretieri did not actually want authorities to penalize her husband for his physical aggression. Instead, she was more concerned with the fact that she had caught him with another woman on several occasions and wanted to have the police act as a mediator and save her relationship.<sup>623</sup>

This was a common trend among female victims of physical and emotional domestic abuse, as documented by sociologist Cecilia Macdowell Santos in her work *Women's Police Stations*. According to Santos, the world's first women's police station was created in the city of Sao Paulo in 1985, with the purpose of furthering the civil protection and rights of

---

<sup>621</sup> In studies regarding domestic violence and police stations in Brazil, it is common to find that many women are forced into silence by male threats of greater physical violence towards themselves or their children. Other violence manifestations also occur between women within a same community or even family, and can be physical, verbal, or emotional abuse. For more information on such cases see: Santos, Cecilia Macdowell. *Women's Police Stations. Gender, Violence, and Justice in Sao Paulo, Brazil*. Palgrave, Macmillan, 2005. Vleet, Krista E. Van. "The Intimacies of Power: Rethinking Violence and Affinity in the Bolivian Andes" In *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Aug. 2002) pp. 567-601. AND Boesten, Jelke. "Pushing Back the Boundaries: Social Policy, Domestic Violence and Women's ORganisations in Peru." In *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (May, 2006) pp.355-378.

<sup>622</sup>Fundo Novacap, Code D.10.01, 1957.

<sup>623</sup>Fundo Novacap, Code D.10.01, 1958.

Brazilian female citizens. However, Santos found that victims were usually not interested in the criminalization of offenses, concluding that “complainants are often poor or come from working-class backgrounds and possess real fears of the police...and use the authority of police officers to mediate their grievances. Police end up acting as if they were judges, and they arbitrate arbitrary sentences.”<sup>624</sup> Although Santos’s study covered the 1980s and 1990s, the scenario that she encountered reflected gender interactions common in the late 1950s, as seen in the many police reports from Brasilia’s early years.

Brasilia’s police reports from 1957 to 1958 also provide extensive documentation of another gendered issue of public order and sexuality, that of prostitution. In oral-history interviews, early residents mentioned the existence of a prostitution zone close to the Free City, and many women remembered that the prostitutes kept to themselves and rarely ventured into the commercial zones, camp areas, and construction sites. There was an informal understanding that prostitutes would not enter the Free City on personal business; instead, they had to buy their necessary goods in neighboring towns or from specific vendors.<sup>625</sup>

Attitudes toward prostitutes varied according to the viewer’s class, race, and occupation. In the many interviews with Brasilia’s female migrants, they used derogatory terms when referring to the city’s prostitutes, and also commented on their moral depravity and, surprisingly, physical unattractiveness. But Ione Rodrigues, a woman employed as a general manager in one of Brasilia’s early and most luxurious brothels, remembered that the

---

<sup>624</sup>Santos, Cecilia Macdowell. *Women’s Police Stations. Gender, Violence, and Justice in Sao Paulo, Brazil*. Palgrave, Macmillan, 2005, p. 5.

<sup>625</sup>Mourao, Tania Fontenele; Oliveira, Monica Ferreira Gaspar. *Poeira e Batom no Planalto Central: 50 Mulheres na Construção de Brasília*. Athalaia Grafica e Editora, 2010.



women who served clients were beautiful, glamorous, and worked in high heels, stockings, and long dresses. In her interview, Rodriguez did not use the term “prostitute.” She hinted to the social necessity of having such services offered to satisfy the men who daily formed long lines outside the brothel’s doors. Ione Rodrigues also commented on the existence of different brothels that catered to specific male groups. As she remembered in later years, the *candangos*’ brothel employed lower class women, while the establishment in which she worked catered to middle and upper class men, attracting politicians and foreign dignitaries to the elegant women employed there, including foreigners:

She [brothel owner] sent telegrams [inviting workers from other famous national brothels] and when an interesting woman wanted to come [to Brasilia] she sent her the airplane ticket. The house [brothel] was always full. There were 42 rooms and these 42 rooms were always occupied. There were women from Goiania, from all over Brazil, and even Japanese [women]. There was one from the United States...whom Juscelino really liked. Her name was Lucia...there were women of all types, from Colombia, from Paraguay...politicians visited the house with their friends and colleagues. I can’t even say their names because some of them are dead but others are still alive.<sup>626</sup>

As Rodriguez remembered, the brothel owner required that all the prostitutes undergo pre-employment medical examinations to ensure that they had no sexually transmitted diseases. The brothel owner kept a formal registration of all employees in a ledger that she

---

<sup>626</sup>Mourao, Tania Fontenele; Oliveira, Monica Ferreira Gaspar *Poeira e Batom no Planalto Central: 50 Mulheres na Construcao de Brasilia*. Athalaia Grafica e Editora, 2010, p.52.

had to personally transport to authorities in the neighboring town of Luziânia. The Brazilian state controlled prostitution in this manner, to ensure that underage girls were not employed.<sup>627</sup> In Brazil, in spite of the country's strong Catholic tradition, prostitution was not considered illegal, but was also not regulated. In other words, while prostitution was not illegal, sexual relations with minors, and indecent public exposures, were. The lack of strict and well-defined policies regulating prostitution and prostitution zones is still criticized by liberal reformers who fight for the rights of minorities and women.<sup>628</sup>

Accordingly, politicians and especially medical experts made efforts during the 1920s to create a national policy that would prevent the spread of venereal disease.<sup>629</sup> Thus, as Sandra Graham has written, "prostitution, recognized as necessary, was to be conscribed and sanitized,"<sup>630</sup> not outlawed. On the other hand, police officers often harassed street prostitutes and imprisoned them on charges of public indecency. "House" prostitutes, as they were often called, did not share those problems, since they were less visible and operated in a more structured manner. Since Brazil's Colonial period, it had been common for lower class women, especially former slaves, to supplement their income through prostitution. Authorities hoped to clean up public space and considered it immoral and

---

<sup>627</sup> For the purpose of this research no such records were found. Since state archives changed from 1980s to 2000, it is possible that these records were transferred to other districts, which would require a more detailed investigation to track them down.

<sup>628</sup> In 2002, the government accepted prostitution as an official employment, allowing prostitutes to register their occupation in their labor cards (*carteira de trabalho*). However, there is still a lot to be done in terms of legislative changes to ensure that this practice will result in real rights and benefits such as social security, and retirement. For more information see: <http://www.brasil.gov.br/secoes/mulher/cidadania-e-seguranca/trafico-exploracao-de-mulheres-e-prostituicao>.

<sup>629</sup> Stepan, Leys. *The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America*. Cornell University Press, 1996.

<sup>630</sup> Graham, Sandra Lauderdale. "Slavery's Impasse: Slave Prostitutes, Small-time Mistresses, and the Brazilian Law of 1871" *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (Oct. 1991) pp.683-684.

illegal for women to offer themselves so openly, but as long as prostitutes worked in specific houses and zones, they tended to evade police harassment.<sup>631</sup>

So again, prostitutes who kept away from general society and plied their trade only in the prostitution zone in Brasilia did not generally encounter trouble either with authorities or with the broader population. Nevertheless, police records from the construction era reveal several complaints filed against sexual promiscuity. On January 21, 1958, the owner of an inn located in the Free City accused two boys of renting a room specifically for the practice of “promiscuous” sex. The case was not followed up, and it is difficult to judge whether that was true or if it was simply a problem of social prejudice against young sexual liberation. Regardless, it sheds light on that society’s unwritten rule of maintaining moral standards within established physical boundaries.<sup>632</sup> On May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1958, another case had a different outcome. Two women were found in the living quarters of the construction company Rabello, and were accused of prostitution. They were deported and the two men who were with them at the time were fired from the company.<sup>633</sup> For Brasilia’s emerging society and social order, terminating the men’s employment was a practical way of reinforcing the rule that excluded women and families from the construction camps. Leniency in this matter could lead to the area’s invasion by families, and could jeopardize the capital’s timely inauguration, and the government’s plans for its future population.

---

<sup>631</sup>Figueiredo, Luciano. “Mulheres nas Minas Gerais” In *Historia das Mulheres no Brasil*. Org. Mary Del Priore and Carla Bassanezi, Editora Contexto, 1997.

<sup>632</sup>Fundo Novacap, Code D.10.01, 1958.

<sup>633</sup>In the reports there is no reference whether the men were also deported or not, but according to general practice they were probably allowed to remain in Brasilia and to seek employment elsewhere. Fundo Novacap, Code D.10.01, 1958.

A similar story appeared in police records from February 10, 1958, when construction worker Antonio Cavalcanti was caught having sex with Maria Abadia who, in the police report, was not formally called a prostitute but rather a “frivolous woman.” Both this man and the woman were sent to jail for a couple of days, but were later released after fair warning and reprimand.<sup>634</sup> This case illustrates how, in 1950s Brasilia, people drew a sharp moral division between young women who were sexually permissive, and those working formally as prostitutes. For the latter, although the practice of prostitution placed them in an inferior social position, they were granted greater leniency than, in some cases, sexually-emancipated girls, providing that the prostitutes worked within the boundaries of society’s informal laws.

The examination of prostitution in the frontier space of Brasilia also sheds light on accepted gender roles and masculinity. The testimonies of male workers and female migrants in Brasilia both confirm the tradition that people deemed prostitution to be a necessary instrument of social order, and a viable alternative to marriage. Modern economists Lena Edlund and Evelyn Korn have suggested that analysis of prostitution should reach beyond terms of socio-cultural implications. Instead, Edlund and Korn argue that prostitution should be defined as “the act of rendering, from the client’s point of view, non-reproductive sex against payment... which [is consistent with] the legal notion of marriage [as a] contract linking husband to children borne by the wife.”<sup>635</sup> This definition of prostitution places it within the realm of commercial activities, and explains how many

---

<sup>634</sup>Fundo Novacap, Code D.10.01, 1958.

<sup>635</sup> Edlund, Lena; Korn, Evelyn. “A Theory of Prostitution” In *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 110, No. 1 (February 2000), p. 183.

women gained more power and financial independence through its practice, both in 1950s Brasilia and elsewhere.

Likewise, according to many interviewees, at least some prostitutes who opened brothels in Brasilia later became rich, owned property, and gained local fame. For the thousands of construction workers residing in the different company lodgings, prostitution represented sexual release, entertainment, and the confirmation of their expected masculine roles. Among male workers, conversations about their sexual encounters were customary. Plans for going together to visit the brothels played an important role in consolidating male friendships and power.

Following the artificial construction of gender roles, historians can understand Brazilian masculinity as a cultural, economic, and social construct that has variations according to region, race, and class, and that was engendered in a specific political and economic context. *Nordestino* men tended to create their concepts of masculine valor out of the need to reaffirm regional traditions of virility in light of a rapidly changing Brazil that risked further marginalizing the Northeastern region. According to Brazilian historian Durval Muniz de Albuquerque Jr., as political and commercial power centered on Brazil's growing and industrializing coast increased during the early 1900s, the northeastern upper class felt compelled to recreate a culture that offered a radical alternative to Rio de Janeiro's cosmopolitanism, modernization, and even budding feminism. Thus, *nordestino* political and intellectual elites immortalized local legends, and consolidated regional machismo in their many literary works. Consequently, the image of the *nordestino* as a man prone to violence,

intense jealousy, and courageous enough to defend honor even through death was confirmed.<sup>636</sup>

Another prominent historian specializing in Brazil, Martha S. Santos has analyzed the formulation of masculinity as an element of the elitist attempt at hegemonic control.<sup>637</sup> However, gendered identities are truly constructed through customs, beliefs, and daily practices, regardless if they emerge from the top down, or if they are propelled by popular forces. In this, the region's elite was successful: it elaborated on a system of relationships and power struggles that was reproduced, and later fully embraced, by the general population of the *nordeste*. Subsequently, it was also readily accepted by Brazilian society more broadly. Within this context of gendered identities, men exerted their masculinity through the protection of female sexual honor, and by assuming the role of primary material providers.

Likewise, it was because of this newly strengthened sense of *nordeste* masculinity that some Brazilians regarded men as justified in their violent outbursts as defenders of their family's honor. This is the cultural setting that shaped interactions of the thousands of poor construction workers who migrated to Brasilia, especially for those hailing from the Northeast. For the *candangos*, masculinity was demonstrated by their roles of migratory workers seeking financial compensation for their families. However, in reality, migration offered a contradictory situation since it also represented male humiliation as failed family providers in their home regions. Nonetheless, for these destitute men, moving to Brasilia

---

<sup>636</sup> Albuquerque Junior, Durval Muniz de. *A invencao do Nordeste e outras artes*. 2d ed. Recife: Fundação Joaquim Nabuco, Editora Massangana, 2001.

<sup>637</sup> Santos, Martha S. *Cleansing Honor with Blood. Masculinity, Violence, and Power in the Backlands of Northeast Brazil, 1845-1889*. Stanford University Press, 2012.

offered an alternative: in the new city, they would be considered more than mere survivors of regional poverty and draught; government imagery elevated them in status, as the brave men who answered the call of President Kubitschek to build a modern capital and a new nation. Through the government's rhetoric of nationalism, working-class male power and pride were restored and reinforced.

This focus on *nordeste* machismo is evident in the language used to both justify the construction of a new capital, and to attract workers to Brasilia. On October 2, 1957, the newspaper *Diário de Notícias* published an excerpt from Kubitschek's recent speech in which the president declared:

This act [construction] represents the most “manly” steps the country has ever taken, after its independence, towards the full affirmation of its people...in the extraordinary task to populate and civilize its conquered lands, vast as a continent; to integrate for the greater good of humanity, one of the richest territories of the world.<sup>638</sup>

Therefore, by associating construction and the migration of workers with masculine honor and pride, government discourse reinforced traditional gender identities and, consequently, established patriarchal relations. However, there were variations to those roles according to other social elements such as class. In many public speeches during his presidential campaign, and even after his victory, Kubitschek addressed two groups separately. When referring to the Free City and its fiscal liberties, he called for families, men and women, to move to Brasilia, as a strategy for encouraging creation of a strong

---

<sup>638</sup> *Diário de Notícias*, 2/10/1957. Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal, Brasilia.

entrepreneurial middle-class. On the other hand, when addressing primarily construction workers, or the *candangos*, he did not generally issue such an enthusiastic invitation to women; authorities desired lower-class migration to consist primarily of men.

This absence of any formal welcome in Brasília for working-class women was reflected in Novacap's regulation that only allowed single men to reside in the construction companies' free lodgings. That official housing was reserved for the unmarried and unaccompanied *candangos*, a population of migrants who were expected to leave after construction was completed. After all, these itinerant wage laborers commonly engaged in seasonal migrations in search of jobs, and those men occasionally returned to their hometowns. However, 1950s propaganda touting the wonders of the emerging capital city was so convincing that even many of the workers' families and wives wanted to join their construction-worker husbands in moving there to participate in the nation-building process.<sup>639</sup> Moreover, government rhetoric portrayed Brasília as the land of opportunity for the working class, more so than the already saturated industrial centers of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.

Ultimately, the rhetoric of state building employed to justify the construction of Brasília created a system that still practiced patronage, social and racial exclusion, and paternalism, under the guise of modernity and equality. While all groups mostly benefitted from the new capital at least temporarily, they experienced its construction in different ways, which translated into renegotiated gender identities and discriminatory practices often reinforced by hegemonic masculinity. The term "hegemonic masculinity" was coined by

---

<sup>639</sup>Ribeiro, Gustavo Lins. *A Capital da Esperança: A Experiência dos Trabalhadores na Construção de Brasília*. Editora UnB, 2008.



Australian sociologist R.W. Connell in 1985, but gained greater scholarly currency with the publication of her book *Gender and Power*.<sup>640</sup> Representing the existence of multiple masculinities within gender relations, which are reproduced by different classes and groups as manifestations of power and dominance, hegemonic masculinities were clearly present in Brasília's early social structure. The many workers who migrated to the city in search of professional opportunities, adventure, and in response to a national calling took with them their culturally and socially constructed sense of masculinity. In spite of regional differences and diverse backgrounds, these men shared a trust in pre-established forms of gender relations that reinforced class and gender hierarchy.

The term "hegemonic masculinities" represents norms and practices employed by a dominant group to assert another's subordination. Thus, seeking empowerment, lower class men such as the *candangos* reproduced those dynamics and expectations in their relationships with yet other inferior groups, such as women. Moreover, the general valorization of masculine pride, virility, honor, sexual prowess, and the defense of female respectability was transported beyond class, race, and regional boundaries, although some groups manifested it more intensely than others.

One practical example of hegemonic masculinities used to reinforce patriarchal binds in Brasília, is the story of Suzana Conceição Mendonça's constant taunting and humiliation by groups of construction workers who drove past her wilderness camp. Again, in later oral-histories, Mendonça remembered how men jeered at her and called her a "low-class whore," accusing her of hiding in the wilderness to perform her "depraved" sexual deeds. Ironically,

---

<sup>640</sup> Connell, R.W. *Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics*. Stanford University Press, 1987.

in all likelihood these were the same men who also exerted their masculinities through regular trips to Brasilia's prostitution zones, yet were wrongly accusing Suzana of doing something that they practiced and supported. In their later testimonies, *candango* men spoke openly about the practice of hiring prostitutes, in stories they proudly retold. In sharp contrast, such comments are strikingly absent in oral histories of the *pioneiros*. While many pioneers avoided such direct confessions about paying for sex during their early years in Brasilia, evidence suggests that those men still discreetly engaged in such activities. In this sense, had the men taunting Suzana been engineers and upper class employees, their defense of a higher moral standard would theoretically be understandable, yet not justifiable. However, it was the lower class construction workers who embraced the upper classes' morality, while simultaneously contradicting those standards through their quest for traditional masculine confirmation.

Within established social norms of 1950s Brazil, men were expected either to get married or settle down in an informal union. If for women, marriage meant social respect and financial stability, for men, it also represented the comfort of domestic life. However, while upper class men knew that society expected them to eventually make legal marriages their lower-class counterparts preferred consensual unions as a way to avoid the extra cost of marital fees and bureaucratic impediments, but also because of the flexibility and greater mobility that informal pairings offered.<sup>641</sup>

This distinction both in male expectations and practices by class appears in the oral history of construction worker Eronildes Guerra de Queiroz, who recounted how he sought

---

<sup>641</sup>Soihet, Rachel. "Mulheres pobres e violencia no Brasil urbano." In *Historia das Mulheres no Brasil*. Org. Mary Del Priore, Editora Contexto, 1997., pp. 362-400.

female help and companionship during his early years in Brasilia. He remembered establishing a consensual union with a woman he called “an old, toothless prostitute” who suffered from goiter. In spite of what he considered her ugly appearance, de Queiroz was content because whenever he chose to go home, she would have sex with him and do his laundry. Sadly, one day he arrived at the shack he had built for her and found her dead, her already swollen body laying by an open bottle of pills. As he remembered it, “I felt for the poor, old *goiana*.<sup>642</sup> Then I went to find another *goiana*... from her family to place in my shack.”<sup>643</sup> For Eronildes, as for many other men, a woman’s primary role was to guarantee his domestic comfort. He later broke off his informal union and legally married a woman from Rio de Janeiro who worked as an administrator for Novacap. The marriage did not last, and ended in a *desquite*, but the fact that he chose a financially stable woman to formally wed reflected the unequal standards behind consensual unions and gender relations. According to the marital search theory, men and women choose spouses based on expected social and financial compensations that such unions entail. In sum, if economic advances and social status through marriage could not be gained, then a simple informal union, for the sake of temporary domestic satisfaction, would do.<sup>644</sup>

The same mentality was shared by Clementino Candido, another construction worker who viewed his relationships with women as means of ensuring his domestic comfort and personal care. Candido remembered how he married “for the woman to look after my father

---

<sup>642</sup>She was from the neighboring city of Goiania, in the state of Goias. People born of living in that state were and still are called *goiano* for men, or *goiana* for women.

<sup>643</sup>Queiroz, Eronildes Guerra. *Depoimento – Programa de Historia Oral*. Brasilia. Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal, 1991, p.29.

<sup>644</sup>Fussel, Elizabeth; Palloni, Alberto. “Persistent Marriage Regimes in Changing Times” *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol. 66, No.5, Special Issue: International Perspectives on Families and Social Change (Dec., 2004), pp.1201-1213.

and my mother”<sup>645</sup> whom he had brought to Brasilia after its inauguration. However, his wife disappeared and resurfaced in a prison in Goiania, where authorities summoned Candido to take charge of her, since she was still his legal responsibility. After bailing her out, he took her back to Brasilia but, after a domestic fight, the woman shot him and left. He survived the domestic attack with an injured masculine pride (he repeatedly mentioned how she humiliated him) and never saw her again.

Violence was not restricted to the domestic sphere, and fights between men were common occurrences. On November 21, 1957, the police ledger registered several cases of drunkenness and disorderly conduct, as they were referred to. Most of the conflicts happened between construction workers who, once under the influence of alcohol, lost all sense of self control. Furthermore, it was through such manifestations that many men exercised their masculinity in defense of honor. Examining the brief descriptions of such occurrences, it is possible to observe that lower class construction workers and middle and upper class engineers, technocrats and employees were all subject to the same rules, and were all reprimanded by authorities. For the GEB, the local police force that was set up during Brasilia’s early construction years, the maintenance of public order was paramount for construction on the city to unfold according to schedule. Furthermore, if workers and the local population were not controlled, then violence and disorder could run rampant, which was a risk that the government was not willing to take.

In spite of the officially all-encompassing character of Brasilia’s early laws, which nominally applied to all workers and migrants regardless of race, class, gender, and

---

<sup>645</sup>Candido, Clementino. *Depoimento – Programa de Historia Oral*. Brasilia. Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal, 1990, p.25.

occupation, it was the middle and upper class migrants who benefitted most from their greater social status and mobility within the modernist city. Since government and the construction companies offered most of those more well-off men houses outside of the construction camps, they and their families could thus congregate within the safety of their domestic spheres. On the other hand, for the thousands of lower-class construction workers residing in the male-only areas of construction camps, their entertainment was located elsewhere. Journeys to and from bars took those men into public space, which made them more vulnerable to police harassment, and also to street fights. In other words, while the *candangos* relied on bars and public gatherings for entertainment, the engineers, technocrats, and administrative personnel routinely met in private homes. Hence, the possibility of private congregation guaranteed those more well-off men greater protection from the scrutiny of GEB surveillance, a pattern that helped explain why there were fewer arrests for public disorder among the upper classes. This is observed in Braulina Carvalho's testimony. She was a Novacap employee who arrived in Brasilia in 1957, and remembered how her colleagues often met at her house for parties in which they played songs, drank alcohol, and socialized until late into the night: "There was a group that went to my house. They played all day, arranged all the musical instruments, even piano, on a truck and [transported them over]." <sup>646</sup>

In spite of the paramount need for order in the modernist city, considerations of class also played important roles in determining which men could leave police stations with a mere warning, and who had to be formally registered as an offender. In his recollections,

---

<sup>646</sup>Mourão, Tania Fontenele; Oliveira, Monica Ferreira Gaspar *Poeira e Batom no Planalto Central: 50 Mulheres na Construção de Brasília*. Athalaia Grafica e Editora, 2010, p.71.

Hilderval Teixeira, an engineer who arrived in Brasilia in 1957, remembered how a close friend, another engineer, had the habit of driving around Brasilia on weekend nights hunting down drunk, and disorderly, workers to apprehend and take over to the GEB headquarters: "...he would place him [the drunk worker] in the truck and drive to the GEB. 'Here you go, he was causing trouble.' Then he would turn to me and say 'Let's go to the Free City and find some more'...that's how he spent some nights [for fun]."<sup>647</sup> If for Teixeira and his friend this was a form of leisure, for the apprehended workers, being apprehended could have serious consequences. If a man was repeatedly accused of public disorderly conduct, authorities could impose serious fines or even deport him.

The examination of police records from 1957 to 1958 also showed that during the first year of Brasilia's construction, there was a relatively large incidence of complaints against public disorder, which included allegations of alcohol abuse, bar fights, and even domestic violence. The following year witnessed an increase in the number of commercial complaints of liability. This did not mean that there were fewer fights, sexual crimes, and domestic violence in the city's second year. Rather, such crime trends suggest that the emerging society was adapting to its frontier space and, with the population increase and the growth of commercial activities, migrants were then as concerned with protecting their property and financial rights, as they were with safeguarding their honor.<sup>648</sup>

Finally, the many and diverse social and gender interactions that took place in the setting of the frontier city were defined by often contradictory principles that sought to reinforce patriarchal authority and social and gender hierarchies. According to historian

<sup>647</sup>Teixeira, Hilderval. *Depoimento – Programa de Historia Oral*. Brasilia. Arquivo Publico do Distrito Federal, 1989, p.29.

<sup>648</sup>Fundo Novacap, Code D.10.01, 1957-1960.

Martha S. Santos, “cultural practices that had honor and masculinity at their center, including ritualized verbal exchanges, fights, patterns and rhythms of work, games, and everyday interaction, as well as discourse, reproduced and naturalized patriarchy, recreated the boundaries between masculinity and femininity, and legitimized particular forms of masculine domination.”<sup>649</sup> Although her study focuses on regional gender identities during a specific timeframe, her analysis is extendable to the context of Brasilia’s emerging society.

The contradiction between the reinforcement of patronage and traditional gender roles, and Brasilia’s symbolic modern representation is evident in the ways that different groups experienced and interpreted national discourse and gender identities. While upper class women felt more empowered by their presence and participation in such a historical moment, their lower class equivalents remained relegated to unequal gender and social conditions, marginalized by informal work opportunities. In addition, while middle and upper class women attempted to reproduce masculine independence and strength, such as Eleonora Quadros’ gender-challenging fashion, they still defended their femininity as fundamental elements of their respectability, also seen in Quadros’ daily use of perfume and makeup, and in her decision to leave the work environment once she got married.

Likewise, men also experienced contradictions as they attempted to adapt to the new frontier city while maintaining their masculinity. On a micro level, the allegations of fights and drunk, disorderly conducts in the police reports of 1957 and 1958, indicate that men were still preoccupied with the defense of their individual male honor. On the other hand, the government’s concern with maintaining a consistent work environment meant that

---

<sup>649</sup>Santos, Martha S. *Cleansing Honor with Blood. Masculinity, Violence, and Power in the Backlands of Northeast Brazil, 1845-1889*. Stanford University Press, 2012, pp. 10-11.

authorities worked to impose severe control over traditional masculine behavior. This explains why street and bar fights, and drunken disorderly conducts prevailed as the most common reasons for male incarceration, punishment, or even deportation. While the government instigated masculine pride in the adventurous spirit of the *candango*, it simultaneously condemned individual manifestations of masculinity, but without endangering pre-established gender norms. One of the results of this contradiction in social norms and gender identities is the fact that during Brasilia's construction years, women remained excluded from major engineering posts and from construction sites, but the city desired to have women serve in the fields of teaching and nursing, areas that grew especially after 1958.

In conclusion, this work's historical and sociological examinations of women's roles in Brasilia during its construction years, serves to confirm the country's then-common sexual division of labor that reinforced patriarchal traditions. Interestingly, the many women and men who migrated to the future capital, in giving oral-history interviews years later, still refrained from criticizing women's professional limitations during the city's construction. Instead, both the men and women often proudly referred to the female role as providing both practical and psychological support for men's construction endeavors, a mentality that continued to relegate women to the gendered category of mere assistant, instead of equal agents of transformation. When considering that promoters touted Brasilia as representing the dawn of a new national era, it might have seemed a natural opportunity for the continued growth of Brazilian feminism, allowing women to claim greater and equal participatory rights. The truth is multifaceted, showing how class, race, and geographic



origin combined in complex ways to both stretch gender assumptions to create new frontier-city opportunities and to reinforce traditional gender limitations. Oral histories, police records, and other evidence give a first-hand look at the many stories of the men and women who migrated to the frontier's gendered, yet modernist, city, to shed new light on the complex intricacies of gender identities, nationalism, and state building in Brazil.

## CHAPTER 8. CONCLUSIONS

I believe that if it weren't for women in Brasilia, Brasilia would not have been built. It isn't that women worked in the construction areas...they did

not, but they gave the necessary backup and support without which the men would not be successful.<sup>650</sup>

The statement given by Helena Maria Viveiros, a self-identified pioneer who arrived in Brasilia in 1959, and recorded in the DVD *Poeira e Batom*, illustrates the significance of women's participation in the capital's construction. It also sheds light on how the many women who migrated to the frontier city interpreted their role in the historical relocation of Brazil's political capital. Often forgotten by today's politicians, writers, and intellectuals who study and write about the history of Brasilia, these women maintained a strong sense of pride in their personal accomplishments in the modernist city. Even if traditional scholarship has failed to incorporate them into the narrative of Brasilia's construction as crucial elements, nevertheless the women preserved their memories by sharing their adventures with friends and family members. In this sense, these women did what women tend to do historically: preserve local and family histories through oral transmission and storytelling.

In 2010, authors Tania Fontenele Mourão and Monica Ferreira Gaspar de Oliveira published the book *Poeira e Batom*, in which they recounted the story of Brasilia's construction through the eyes of the women who participated in that historical moment. The book represented an important step towards broadening the scope of scholarship on Brazil's modernist capital. By offering these women the opportunity of voicing their memories, authors Fontenele Mourão and Gaspar de Oliveira also ensured that their reminiscences would forever be recorded. This effort represents an important initial step towards the

---

<sup>650</sup>Helena Maria Viveiros, interviewed in the DVD *Poeira e Batom*, *50 Mulheres na Construcao de Brasilia*. Project by Tania Fontenele Mourao.

inclusion of women's experiences into the male-dominated narrative of Brasilia's construction.

The project of building a new capital had been an old dream of Brazil's colonial elite since the late 1700s, and through time, the idea gained importance through characterization as a foundation myth. From the perspective of foundation mythology, Brasilia was meant to represent the cradle of a new, and modern, Brazil. Its construction symbolized a rupture with the past and its problems, while holding the promise of a grand future based on greater territorial integration and national unity. It was a moment of reinvention, which Brazil dearly needed after suffering from intense political turmoil, especially during Vargas' second mandate in the 1950s. Following his suicide, Brazil shook with the power of popular manifestation against the late president's opponents, and national unity was deeply rattled. In light of all the turmoil, the promise of a new capital offered a much needed break from previous political discord. The opposition kept busy with an anti-Brasilia campaign, while President Juscelino Kubitschek's administration offered the general population the exciting dream of a new era. This was what Kubitschek represented for the people: change, and with change came the hope of a better future and a stronger nation.

From its beginning, the campaign for the capital's relocation was laden with controversy, which the opposition used to weaken Kubitschek's construction plans. However, through political maneuvering and the extensive use of propaganda, he was able to gain the necessary political and popular support to push Brasilia from its theoretical existence into the realm of true accomplishments. Thus, work on the capital fully began in 1957, and the country was both excited and scared of what it represented for the future. In

the end, the opposition's claims that Brasilia would bury the country in debt held true, but so did the dreams of the thousands who believed that the new capital would foster greater integration, which it did. The fact that Brasilia brought greater development to the country's interior is undeniable, as is the fact that it also put significant financial strain on the nation's economy.

Regardless of the many negative facts surrounding Brasilia's construction, most of its critics agree that in terms of engineering and architecture, Brasilia was, and still is, a marvel. Its modernist buildings are unique, and building a new urban center in little over three years was an important engineering feat. However, currently the city suffers from what critics call bad urban planning, meaning intense traffic jams and the dislocation of populations living in surrounding towns. Furthermore, the government's initial plan of excluding an unwanted (primarily lower-class) population from the future capital proved unsuccessful. The fact that thousands of workers refused to return to their hometowns after finishing their initial construction assignments and, instead, fought for the right to reside in, and around, the city they had built shows how Brazil's state-controlled urban plans ultimately failed to control for the power of spontaneous urbanization. While architects, engineers, and technocrats planned the new city, its migrant population ultimately shaped its functions and dynamics; in other words, this demonstrates that experts can try to design a city from above, but it will be claimed from below.

In one of the many interviews given on April 21, 1960, after Brasilia's inaugural ceremony, Kubitschek affirmed that "this is a live city. In it there is no room for the ghosts

of [our] past.”<sup>651</sup> In this statement, he defined Brasília as a pulsating and dynamic urban center that would be forever free from the negative factors that had ailed other centers in the past, such as intense traffic, social inequality, rebellions, corruption, and high criminal rates. In Kubitschek’s perception, the problems of territorial and political fragmentation that had previously prevented the country’s interior regions from participating directly in the nation’s politics were in the past. Thus, he hoped, and firmly believed, that these “ghosts” would no longer haunt the country, and would not dominate Brasília’s daily life.

Sadly, his words did not prove true, and while the area initially covered by the capital’s Pilot Plan is still considered a zone of low crime rate, the settlements established around it are not. Furthermore, while Brasília brought greater integration to Brazil’s central region, its northern area, especially where the Amazon rainforest is located, remains relatively isolated. As for the many political battles that shook Rio de Janeiro in the years preceding Brasília’s inauguration, such tensions soon found their way to Brazil’s new capital city. In the years following its inauguration, Brasília went from the condition of being neglected politically, with residents fearing that the new president, Jânio Quadros,<sup>652</sup> would try and revoke the capital’s relocation, to representing an important tool in the military dictatorship that soon followed in 1964. Consequently, although a new political center located closer to the country’s interior stimulated regional integration, it also facilitated the centralization of power. Hence, Brasília offered the right elements for a dictatorial regime: greater distance from the country’s main economic center of São Paulo and its traditional

<sup>651</sup>Interview cited in the newspaper *Jornal Última Hora*, on April 26<sup>th</sup>, 1960. Public Archives of the Federal District, Brasília-DF.

<sup>652</sup>Mourão, Tania Fontenele; Oliveira, Monica Ferreira Gaspar *Poeira e Batom no Planalto Central: 50 Mulheres na Construção de Brasília*. Petrobras, 2010. Tamanini, L. *Brasília : memória da construção*. 2nd ed. Brasília DF: Projecto Editorial, 2003. Holston, James. *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasília*. 1st ed. University Of Chicago Press, 1989.

political center of Rio de Janeiro. Brasilia's urban space, designed based on efficiency and zoning, ultimately fostered a more effective way of state control over geographic space and popular manifestations.

With the advent of the Brazilian military dictatorship in 1964,<sup>653</sup> Brasilia's residents transitioned from their previous sense of excitement and nationalism experienced during its construction years, into a new harsh reality of censorship and state control. This historical period represents another important stage in Brazilian politics and urban development, which still calls for scholars to analyze the city's functions under a different regime and its population's experiences in such a controlled space. Regardless of how the dictatorial governing body that replaced Kubitschek used Brasilia to further its political aims and social control, the city, during its earlier construction years, truly represented a moment of national enthusiasm and integration.

Brasilia still stands out as an impressive feat of modernist architecture, and the influences of Le Corbusier's architecture and urban planning are noticeable in the capital's horizontality and zoning efforts. However, in spite of the presence of Corbusien elements in the project designed by urban planner Lucio Costa, and by Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer, the fundamental goal of social control and transformation through city planning was not achieved. In the government's nationalist rhetoric, Brasilia represented the dawn of

---

<sup>653</sup> This dictatorship lasted for over twenty years, and Brasilia's inhabitants faced intense censorship and persecution while they still attempted to consolidate their identity as a new, urban society. Furthermore, Brasilia's population was considerably young, especially after the inauguration of the University of Brasilia (UnB) attracted middle and upper class students from neighboring towns. Thus, this young generation of *Brasilienses* found a political voice, even if it was suppressed. For more information on the dictatorship see: Skidmore, Thomas. *The politics of military rule in Brazil 1964-85*. Oxford University Press, 1988. And Alves, Maria Helena Moreira. *Estado e Oposicao no Brasil 1964-1984*. EDUSC, 2005.

a new age for Brazil, a moment in which the Positivist creed of “order and progress” would finally be transformed into a tangible construct, no longer belonging in the category of theoretical discourse. In Brasilia, advocates hoped, modernity and technology would finally be visible and evident.

This enthusiasm for innovation, architectural novelty, and national integration was soon widespread, and attracted many workers who sought financial goal and their personal inclusion into the body politic through employment in the capital’s construction. Thousands of workers flocked to Brasilia from 1957 to 1960, motivated by the promise of financial growth, and by the singular opportunity of participating in a moment of national construction. Most hailed from the states of Brazil’s *nordeste*, and represented an impoverished and displaced population that struggled with seasonal drought, unemployment, and social exclusion. This contingent of poor *nordestino* men constituted the bulk of Brasilia’s construction laborers, a group that authorities highly desired to attract during the period of intense construction work, but also rejected after the city’s inauguration. In those experts’ minds, the modernist capital did not belong to such a marginalized group, but instead was designed for Brazil’s middle and upper classes of politicians, technocrats, and civil servants. Destitute of residential rights and claims over the new capital, this lower-class group of unwanted Brazilians had to renegotiate their place within the newly constructed cityscape by reinventing identities. During this process of negotiation, race, class, gender, nationalism, and regional prejudices were employed as arguments for the regulation of illegal settlements. After months of discussion and arbitration, the government conceded to allow the establishment of legal settlements around Brasilia’s Pilot Plan center. That

decision violated the authorities' initial vision for the city, but ended up offering many workers the opportunity of remaining close to the new capital, and working in or around Brazil's new political center.

Unequal relations of race, class, and regional identities were also present in the daily associations between Brasilia's growing female population, and their male counterparts. Even though the physical job of construction clearly remained masculine work, the promise of a better future for the country, and the chance of a new start for each individual involved in the capital's construction, also attracted myriads of women. Some of the female migrants came to Brasilia accompanying their male heads of households, while others came alone, in search of personal achievement and financial independence. Historians, anthropologists or sociologists studying Brasilia's construction years have not yet offered any thorough analysis of the stories of these women, which illustrate the intricate ways that the frontier capital's social expectations intersected with pre-established gender roles to create a unique new context of gender identities. As this research illustrates here, gender relationships in Brasilia evolved at a moment of contradiction: while many women faced distinct difficulties and attempted to recreate traditional patriarchal relationships within that emerging society, others felt empowered by the physical distance from traditional urban centers, which motivated them in their quests for personal growth and greater financial emancipation. Nonetheless, even the women who claimed a freedom to openly navigate the public spaces of the new frontier city reproduced and reinforced, to varying degrees, traditional gender and class roles and expectations. Furthermore, the extent of personal freedom and empowerment



varied according to a woman's race and class, in patterns that resonated with Brazil's historic gender relationships.

Traditional gender roles were also reinforced by the practices of the many male construction workers who built Brasilia. By living in the male-exclusive construction camps, these men practiced their concepts of masculinity, which involved visits to the area's prostitution zone, and the quest for a female partner that would help with domestic work and give them sexual release, and the material and emotional support that they craved. Violence was also another form of masculine manifestations, and especially among the lower-class construction workers arguments, fights, sexual harassment and even deaths were common occurrences. However, for the middle and upper class echelons of Brasilia's emerging society, violence remained a distant reality, and they were insulated from these dangers by social status, racial composition, and political rights.

Finally, this study has offered a closer examination of Brasilia's gender, race, and class structure during its construction years, work which can serve as the foundation for future research into the city's development process after its inauguration on April 21, 1960. The post-inaugural period of the modernist capital's history holds important tales of how gender roles were further construed within the political and social context of a country that struggled with political instability, tradition, and with the paramount desire to prove itself as a modern and developed nation. The examination of Brasilia's social and gendered relations during its construction years functions as a stepping stone in the process of further unveiling how different social, gender, and racial groups interacted in a rapidly changing political

structure, and how citizens interpreted their roles within the scope of an increasingly domineering state.

In conclusion, looking back in 2010 at the city where she had arrived when only six years old, before the inauguration of the new capital, human-rights activist Iara Pietricovsky offers an interesting evaluation of Brasilia's symbolic meaning:

Brasilia is an emancipated woman in her fifties, with many contradictions yet influencing the [social] behavior of Brazil and the world...it is a woman who was able to expand and transform herself into Brazil's real capital, while placing herself within the scope of international society.<sup>654</sup>

The metaphor fits perfectly; like its resident women and minorities, Brasilia had to surpass many obstacles and overcome opposition. Its creation reflected many social, cultural, and even political contradictions and ultimately failed to fulfill its full utopian promise, but in the end, its people helped make Brasilia a worthy project and distinctive capital.

## REFERENCES

Abreu, Martha. "Meninas Perdidas" In *História das Crianças no Brasil*. Ed. Mary Del Priore, 289-316. Editora Contexto, 1999.

Albuquerque Jr., Durval Muniz; Hallewell, Laurence. "Weaving Tradition: The Invention of the Brazilian Northeast", *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 31, No. 2, Brazilian Northeast: Globalization, Labor, and Poverty (March, 2004), pp. 42-61.

\_\_\_\_\_, *A invenção do Nordeste e outras artes*. 2d ed. Recife: Fundacao Joaquim Nabuco, Editora Massangana, 2001.

<sup>654</sup>Mourao, Tania Fontenele; Oliveira, Monica Ferreira Gaspar *Poeira e Batom no Planalto Central: 50 Mulheres na Construção de Brasília*. Petrobras, 2010, p.3.

Alexander, Robert Jackson. *Juscelino Kubitschek and the Development of Brazil*. Ohio Univ Pr, 1992.

Alves, Maria Helena Moreira. *Estado e Oposição no Brasil 1964-1984*. EDUSC, 2005.

Amin, Ash, and Stephen Graham. "The Ordinary City." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 22, no. 4. New Series (January 1, 1997): 411-429.

Amin, Ash, and Nigel Thrift. *Cities: Reimagining the Urban*. 1st ed. Polity, 2002.

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, 1983.

Anderson, Robin L. *Colonization as exploitation in the Amazon Rain Forest, 1758-1911*. University Press of Florida, 1999.

Araujo, Clara, and Celi Scalón. *Gênero, Família E Trabalho No Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: FGV Editora, 2005.

Armus, Diego. *Disease in the History of Modern Latin America: From Malaria to Aids*. Duke University Press, 2003.

Asprey, Robert. *The Reign of Napoleon Bonaparte*. Basic Books, 2002.

Baerle, Caspar van. *The history of Brazil under the governorship of Count Johan Maurits of Nassau, 1636-1644*. University Press of Florida, 2011.

Baker, Geoffrey H. *Le Corbusier – The Creative Search: The Formative Years of Charles-Edouard Jeanneret*. Taylor & Francis, 2000.

Barber, Justin D. *The Children of Evolution: Euclides da Cunha and Positivist Discourse in Late Nineteenth Century Brazil*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2009.

Bandeira, Moniz. *A renúncia de Jânio Quadros e a crise pré-64*. Editora Brasiliense, 1979.

Barney, Elvira. *Mulheres pioneiras de Brasília*. (Brasília DF: Thesaurus Editora, 2001).

Batista, Geraldo Nogueira; Ficher, Sylvia; Leitao, Francisco; Franca, Dionisio Alves. "Brasília: a capital in the hinterland." *Planning Twentieth Century Capital Cities*, edited by David L. Gordon, (New York: Routledge, 2006) pp. 164-181.

Bell, David A. *The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare as we Know It*. Mariner Books, 2008.

Bertolli Filho, Claudio. *De Getúlio a Juscelino*. Editora Atica, 2002.

\_\_\_\_\_. *República Velha e a Revolução de 30*. Editora Atica, 2003.

Besse, Susan K. *Restructuring Patriarchy: The Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil, 1914-1940*. The University of North Carolina Press, 1996.

Bethell, Leslie. *Brazil: Empire and Republic 1822-1930*. Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Bethell, Leslie. *Ideas and Ideologies in Twentieth Century Latin America*. Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Bieber, Judy. *Power, patronage, and political violence : state building on a Brazilian frontier, 1822-1889*. University of Nebraska Press, 1999.

Bigio, Elias dos Santos. *Cândido Rondon: a integração nacional*. Contraponto Editora, 2000.

Biggs, Lindy. *The Rational Factory – Architecture, Technology, and Work in America's Age of Mass Production*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002.

Blake, Stanley E. *The Vigorous Core of Our Nationality: Race and Regional Identity in Northeastern Brazil*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011.

Blomley, Nicholas. "Law, Property, and the Geography of Violence: the Frontier, the Survey, and the Grid." In *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*. Vol. 93, No. 1 (Mar. 2003) p.121.

Boesten, Jelke. "Pushing Back the Boundaries: Social Policy, Domestic Violence and Women's ORganisations in Peru." In *Journal of Latin American Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (May, 2006) pp.355-378.

Bojunga, Claudio. *JK, o artista do impossível*. Rio de Janeiro, Objetiva, 2001.

Borden, Iain, Tim Hall, and Malcolm Miles. *The City Cultures Reader*. 1st ed. Routledge, 2000.

Bosco, Giovanni. *Memoirs of the Oratory*. New Rochelle: Don Bosco Publications, 1989

Bourne, Richard. *Getulio Vargas of Brazil, 1883-1954: sphinx of the pampas*. C. Knight, 1974.

Bridge, Gary. *Reason in the City of Difference*. 1st ed. Routledge, 2005.

Bridge, Gary, and Sophie Watson. *The Blackwell City Reader*. 2nd ed. Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

———. *The New Blackwell Companion to the City*. 1st ed. Wiley-Blackwell, 2011.

Brienen, Rebecca Parker. *Visions of savage paradise: Albert Eckhout, Court Painter in Colonial Dutch Brazil 1637-1644*. Amsterdam University Press, 2007.

- Brillembourg, Carlos. "A Day in Brasilia." *BOMB*, no. 67 (April 1, 1999): 20-21.
- Brooks, H. Allen. *Le Corbusier's Formative Years: Charles-Edouard Jeanneret at La Chaux-de-Fonds*. University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Brown, Lawrence; Sierra, Rodrigo; Digiacinto, Scott; Smith, W. Randy. "Urban-System Evolution in Frontier Settings" in *Geographical Review*, vol. 84, no. 3 (Jul. 1994), pp. 249-265.
- Bueno, Clodoaldo. *Politica Externa da Primeira Republica*. Editora Paz e Terra, 2003.
- Burns, E. Bradford. *A History of Brazil*. Columbia University Press, 1993.
- Butler, Alan. *Butler's lives of the saints*. Burns & Oats, 1999.
- Butler, Judith, and Elizabeth Weed. *The Question of Gender: Joan W. Scott's Critical Feminism*. Indiana University Press, 2011.
- Butler, Judith; Scott, Joan W. *Feminists Theorize the Political*. Routledge, 1992.
- Calasanti, Toni M., and Kathleen F. Slevin. *Age Matters: Re-Aligning Feminist Thinking*. 1st ed. Routledge, 2006.
- Caldwell, Kia Lilly. "Racialized Boundaries: Women's Studies and the Question of Difference in Brazil" *The Journal of Negro Education*, Vol. 70, No. 3, Black Women in the Academy: Challenges and Opportunities (Summer, 2001), pp. 219-230.
- Carrigan, Tim; Connell, Bob; Lee, John. "Towards a New Sociology of Masculinity" In *Theory and Society*, Vol. 14, No. 5 (Sept. 1985), pp. 551-604.
- Carvalho, Jose Murilo de. *The Formation of Souls-Imagery of the Republic in Brazil*. Trans. Clifford E. Landers. University of Notre Dame Press, 2012.
- Caulfield, Sueann. *In Defense of Honor: Sexual Morality, Modernity, and Nation in Early Twentieth-Century Brazil*. Duke University Press, 2000.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Birth of Manguê: Race, Nation, and the Politics of Prostitution in Rio de Janeiro, 1850-1942." In *Sex and Sexuality in Latin America*. Ed. Daniel Balderston and Donna Guy, 86-100. New York University Press, 1997.
- Caulfield, Sueann; Esteves, Martha de Abreu. "Fifty Years of Virginity in Rio de Janeiro: Sexual Politics and Gender Roles in Juridical Popular Discourse, 1890-1940." *Luso-Brazilian Review* 30, I, 1993: 47-74.
- Castells, Manuel. *The Urban Question: A Marxist Approach*. The MIT Press, 1979.
- Castro, Celso. *Militares e a República*. Editora Zahar, 1995.

Celik, Zeynep. "Le Corbusier, Orientalism, Colonialism." *Assemblage*, no. 17 (April 1, 1992):59-77.

Certeau, Michel de. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. 3rd ed. University of California Press, 2011.

Chasteen, John Charles. *Born in Blood & Fire: A Concise History of Latin America*. Third Edition. W. W. Norton & Company, 2011.

Cohen, Jean-Louis. *Le Corbusier and the Mystique of the USSR: Theories and Projects for Moscow, 1928-1936*. Princeton University Press, 1991.

Cohen, Marlene. *Juscelino Kubitschek, o Presidente Bossa Nova*. Editora Globo, 2005.

Colquhoun, Alan. *Modern Architecture*. Oxford University Press, 2002.

Comte, Auguste. *A General View of Positivism*. Forgotten Books, 2012.

Connell, R.W. *Gender and Power: Society, the Person, and Sexual Politics*. Stanford University Press, 1987.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Masculinities*. University of California Press, 2005.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept." In *Gender and Society*, Vol. 19, No. 6 (Dec. 2005), pp. 829-859.

Corbusier, Le. *The City of Tomorrow and its Planning*. Dover Publications, 1987.

Costa, Emilia Viotti da. *The Brazilian Empire Myths and Histories*. The University of Chicago Press, 1985.

Costa, Lucio. *Lucio Costa: Registro de Uma Vivência*. Empresa das Artes, 1995.

Coulter, Michael L.; Myers, Richard S.; Varacalli, Joseph A. "Bosco, St. John (1815-1888)". *Encyclopedia of Catholic Social Thought, Social Science, and Social Policy Supplement*. 3. Scarecrow Press. Pp. 36-38.

Couto, Ronaldo Costa. *Brasilia Kubitschek de Oliveira*. Editora Record, 2010.

Cowan, Ruth Schwartz. *More Work for Mother – The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Hearth to the Microwave*. Basic Books, 1983.

Cueto, Marcos. *Missionaries of Science: the Rockefeller Foundation and Latin America*. Indiana University Press, 1994.

Curtis, James R. "Praças, Place, and Public Life in Urban Brazil" *Geographical Review*, Vol. 90, No. 4 (Oct., 2000), pp.475-492.

Curtis, William J.R. *Le Corbusier: Ideas and Form*. Phaidon, 1986.

DaMatta, Roberto. *Carnival, Rogues, and Heroes: An Interpretation of the Brazilian Dilemma*. University of Notre Dame Press, 1991.

Davis, Diane E. "The Power of Distance: Re-theorizing Social Movements in Latin America" In *Theory and Society*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Aug,1999) pp.585-638.

Desramaut, Francois. *Don Bosco et son temps*. Societa Editrice Internazionale, 1996.

Diacon, Todd A. *Stringing together a nation – Candido Mariano da Silva Rondon and the construction of a modern Brazil, 1906-1930*. Duke University Press, 2004.

D’Incao, Maria Angela. *Amor e Familia no Brasil*. Ed. Contexto, 1989.

Dore, Elizabeth; Molyneux, Maxine. *Hidden Histories of Gender and the State in Latin America*.

Duke University Press Books, 2000.

Doyle, William. *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*. Oxford University Press, 2003.

Edlund, Lena; Korn, Evelyn. "A Theory of Prostitution" In *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 110, No. 1 (February 2000), p. 181-214.

Eksteins, Modris. *Rites of Spring. The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age*. Houghton Mifflin, 1989.

El-Dahdah, Fares. *CASE: Lucio Costa Brasilia’s Superquadras*. Harvard Design School, Prestel, 2005.

Ellis, Geoffrey. *The Napoleonic Empire*. Palgrave, Macmillan, 2003.

Epstein, David G. *Brasilia: Plan and Reality*. University of California Press, 1973.

Esdaile, Charles. *The Peninsular War*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Esteves, Martha de Abreu. *Meninas Perdidas: Os Populares e o Cotidiano do Amor no Rio de Janeiro da Belle Epoque*. Editora Paz e Terra, 1989.

Evenson, Norma. *Two Brazilian Capitals: Architecture and Urbanism in Rio de Janeiro and Brasilia*. Yale University Press, New Haven, 1973.

Fausto, Boris. *A Revolução de 1930*. Companhia das Letras, 1997.

\_\_\_\_\_. *História do Brasil*. Editora da Universidade de Sao Paulo, 1994.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Getulio Vargas*. Companhia Das Letras, 2006.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Imigração: cortes e continuidades". In *História da Vida Privada no Brasil Vol. 4*, Ed. Fernando A. Novais. Companhia das Letras, 1998.

Ferraz, Francisco Cesar. *Os Brasileiros e a Segunda Guerra Mundial*. Jorge Zahar Editor, 2005.

Ferraz, Geraldo. *Warchavchik e a introdução da nova arquitetura no Brasil: 1925 a 1940*. Sao Paulo, 1965.

Ferguson, James. *Expectations of modernity: myths and meanings of urban life on the Zambian copperbelt*. University of California Press, 1999.

Fico, Carlos. *Além do Golpe*. Editora Record, 2004.

Fitting, Peter. "Urban Planning/Utopian Dreaming: Le Corbusier's Chandigarh Today." *Utopian Studies* 13, no. 1 (January 1, 2002): 69-93.

Florida, Richard. *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, and Everyday Life*. Basic Books, 2003.

Fonseca, Claudia. "Inequality Near and Far: Adoption as Seen from the Brazilian Favelas" In *Law and Society Review*, Vol. 36, No. 2, Special Issue on Nonbiological Parenting (2002), pp.397-432.

Fontaine, Pierre-Michel ed. *Race, Class, and Power in Brazil*. Center for Afro-american Studies, University of California, 1985.

Fraser, Valerie. *Building the New World: Modern Architecture in Latin America*. Verso, 2001.

Fraser, Valerie. "Cannibalizing Le Corbusier: the MES Gardens of Roberto Burle Marx" *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, vol. 59, no. 2 (Jun. 2000):180-193.

Fremont-Barnes, Gregory. *The Napoleonic Wars: The Peninsular War 1807-1814*. Osprey Publishing, 2002.

Freyre, Gilberto. *The Masters and the Slaves: a Study in the Development of Brazilian Civilization*. University of California Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1987.

Frisby, David. *Simmel and Since: Essays on Georg Simmel's Social Theory*. Routledge, 2012.

Fussell, Elizabeth; Palloni, Alberto. "Persistent Marriage Regimes in Changing Times" In *Journal of Marriage and Family*, Vol. 66, No. 5, Special Issue: International Perspectives on Families and Social Change (Dec., 2004), pp. 1201-1213.



Fussel, Paul. *The Great War and Modern Memory*. Oxford University Press, 1975.

Gadelha, Sylvio de Sousa. *Subjetividade e menor-idade. Acompanhamento e o dever dos profissionais do social*. Editora Annablume, 1998.

Gagliardi, Jose. *O indigena e a Republica*. Hucitec, 1989.

Garfield, Seth. *Indigenous Struggle at the Heart of Brazil: State Policy, Frontier Expansion, and the Xavantes Indians, 1937-1988*. Duke University Press, 2001.

Gautherot, Marcel, Kenneth Frampton, and Sergio Burgi. *Building Brasilia*. Thames & Hudson, 2010.

Gilloch, Graeme. *Myth and Metropolis: Walter Benjamin and the City*. Polity, 1997.

Godfrey, Brian J. "Modernizing the Brazilian City." *Geographical Review* 81, no. 1 (January 1, 1991): 18-34.

Gomes, Angela. *A invenção do trabalhismo*. 3rd ed. Rio de Janeiro: FGV Editora, 2005.

Gottdiener, Mark, and Ray Hutchison. *The New Urban Sociology: Fourth Edition*. Fourth Edition. Westview Press, 2010.

Graham, Sandra Lauderdale. *House and street – the domestic world of servants and masters in nineteenth-century Rio de Janeiro*. University of Texas Press, 1992.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Slavery's Impasse: Slave Prostitutes, Small-time Mistresses, and the Brazilian Law of 1871" In *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (Oct. 1991) pp.669-694.

Grandazzi, Alexandre. *The foundation of Rome: myth and history*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997.

Graves Jr., Joseph L. *The Emperor's New Clothes Biological Theories of Race at the Millennium*. Rutgers University Press, 2002.

Green, James. N. *We cannot remain silent. Opposition to the Brazilian military dictatorship in the United States*. Duke University Press Books, 2010.

Guillen, Mauro F. *The Taylorized Beauty of the Mechanical: Scientific Management and the Rise of Modernist Architecture*. Princeton University Press, 2008.

Guillén, Mauro F. "Modernism without Modernity: The Rise of Modernist Architecture in Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina, 1890-1940." *Latin American Research Review* 39, no. 2 (January 1, 2004): 6-34.

Hahner, June E. *Emancipating the Female Sex: The Struggle for Women's Rights in Brazil, 1850–1940*. Duke University Press Books, 1993.

Hanchard, Michael. *Racial Politics in Contemporary Brazil*. Duke University Press, 1999.

Hannigan, John A. "Alain Touraine, Manuel Castells and Social Movement Theory a Critical Appraisal." *The Sociological Quarterly* 26, no. 4 (December 1, 1985): 435-454.

Harding, Rachel E. *A Refuge in Thunder: Candomblé and Alternative Spaces of Blackness*. Indiana University Press, 2003.

Harrison, Faye V. "Introduction: Expanding the Discourse on 'Race'." *American Anthropologist* 100, no. 3. New Series (1998): 609-631.

Harvey, David. *Social Justice and the City*. Revised. University of Georgia Press, 2009.

Hasenbalg, Carlos. "Notes on Racial and Political Inequality in Brazil." In *Racial Politics in Contemporary Brazil*. Duke University Press, 1999.

Hayden, Dolores. *Redesigning the American Dream: Gender, Housing, and Family Life*. 2nd ed. W. W. Norton & Company, 2002.

———. *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History*. The MIT Press, 1997.

———. "What Would a Non-Sexist City Be Like? Speculations on Housing, Urban Design, and Human Work." *Signs* 5, no. 3 (April 1, 1980): S170-S187.

Heliodoro, Afonso. *JK Exemplo e Desafio*. Brasília, Thesaurus, 1991.

Hentschke, Jens R. *Vargas and Brazil: New Perspectives*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

Hibbert, Christopher. *The days of the French Revolution*. William Morrow Paperback, 1999.

Highmore, Ben. *Michel De Certeau: Analysing Culture*. Continuum, 2006.

Hilton, Stanley E. *Brazil and the Great Powers, 1930-1939*. University of Texas Press, 1975.

Holanda, Sergio Buarque de. *Historia geral da civilização brasileira*. Difel, 1967.

———. *Raizes do Brasil*. Jose Olympio, 1987.

Holford, William. "Brasília: The Federal Capital of Brazil." *The Geographical Journal* 128, no. 1 (March 1, 1962): 15-17.

Holston, James. *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*. 1st ed. University Of Chicago Press, 1989.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Insurgent Citizenship: Disjunctions of Democracy and Modernity in Brazil*. Princeton University Press, 2009.

Hounshell, David A. *From the American System to Mass Production -1800-1932: The Development of Manufacturing Technology in the United States*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985.

Israel, Jonathan; Schwartz, Stuart. *The expansion of tolerance: religion in Dutch Brazil 1624-1654*. Amsterdam University Press, 2007

Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Modern Library, 2011.

Jackson, Julian. *France: The Dark Years, 1940-1944*. Oxford University Press, 2003.

Johnson, Emily D. *How St. Petersburg Learned to Study Itself: The Russian Idea of Kraevedenie*. Pennsylvania State Univ Pr, 2006.

Jordan, David P. *Transforming Paris: The Life and Labors of Baron Haussmann*. University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Katinsky, Julio. Xavier, Alberto. *Brasilia, Antologia Crítica*. Cosac Naify, 2012.

Kelly, Joan. *Women, History, and Theory: The Essays of Joan Kelly*. The Doubled Vision of Feminist Theory. University Of Chicago Press, 1986.

Khan, Hasan-Uddin; Beinart, Julian; Correa, Charels. *Le Corbusier: Chandigarh and the Modern City*. Mapin Publishing, 2010.

Kubitschek, Juscelino. *Porque Construí Brasília*. Rio de Janeiro, Bloch Editores, 1975.

Latour, Bruno. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2007.

Gomes, Laurentino. *1808: como uma rainha louca, um príncipe medroso e uma corte corrupta enganaram Napoleão e mudaram a história de Portugal e do Brasil*. Editora Planeta, 2007

Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*. 1st ed. Wiley-Blackwell, 1992.

Lery, Jean de. *History of a voyage to the land of Brazil*. University of California Press, 1993.

Lesser, Jeffrey. *Immigration, Ethnicity, and National Identity in Brazil, 1808 to the Present*. Cambridge University Press, 2013.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Negotiating National Identity. Immigrants, Minorities, and the Struggle for Ethnicity in Brazil*. Duke University Press, 1999.

Levine, Robert M. *Vale of Tears: Revisiting the Canudos Massacre in Northeastern Brazil, 1893-1897*. University of California Press, 1995.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Father of the Poor?: Vargas and his Era*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The History of Brazil*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Lewin, Linda. "Some Historical Implications of Kinship Organization for Family-Based Politics in the Brazilian Northeast" In *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Apr. 1979) pp. 262-292.

Lewis, J.Lowell. "Sex and violence in Brazil: carnaval, capoeira, and the problem of everyday life." In *American Ethnologist* Vol. 26, No. 3 (Aug.,1999) pp.539-557.

Lima, Manuel de Oliveira. *D. João VI no Brasil (1808)*. Topbooks, 1996.

Linger, Daniel T. *Dangerous encounters: meanings of violence in a Brazilian city*. Stanford University Press, 1992.

Longley, Paul A., Michael Batty, and John Shepherd. "The Size, Shape and Dimension of Urban Settlements." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 16, no. 1. New Series (January 1, 1991): 75-94.

Lopez, Adriana; Mota, Carlos Guilherme. *História do Brasil, uma interpretação*. Editora Senac Sao Paulo, 2008.

Low, Setha M. "The Anthropology of Cities: Imagining and Theorizing the City." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 25 (January 1, 1996): 383-409.

Luckhurst, Roger. "Bruno Latour's Scientifiction: Networks, Assemblages, and Tangled Objects." *Science Fiction Studies* 33, no. 1 (March 1, 2006): 4-17.

Lyman, Stanford M. "Robert E. Park Reconsidered: The Early Writings." *The American Sociologist* 21, no. 4 (December 1, 1990): 342-351.

\_\_\_\_\_. "The Race Relations Cycle of Robert E. Park." *The Pacific Sociological Review* 11, no. 1 (April 1, 1968): 16-22.

Macauley, Fiona. *Gender Politics in Brazil and Chile*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

Machado, Lia Zanotta. *Feminismo em Movimento*. Editora Francis, 2010.

Magubane, Zine. *Bringing the Empire Home: Race, Class, and Gender in Britain and Colonial South Africa*. University of Chicago Press, 2003.

Malerba, Jurandir. *A corte no exílio: civilização e poder no Brasil as vésperas de Independência (1808 a 1822)*. Companhia das Letras, 2000.

Marsden, P. D. "Brasilia: Modern Day Stonehenge." *BMJ: British Medical Journal* 299, no. 6702 (1989): 781-782.

Marx, Anthony W. *Making race and nation: a comparison of South Africa, the United States, and Brazil*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Matta, Roberto da. *A Casa e a Rua: Espaço, Cidadania, Mulher e Morte no Brasil*. Sao Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1985.

McCann, Bryan. *Hello, Hello Brazil: Popular Music in the Making of Modern Brazil*. Duke University Press, 2004.

Meade, Teresa A. *A History of Modern Latin America: 1800 to the Present*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

\_\_\_\_\_, Teresa. "Living Worse and Costing More: Resistance and Riot in Rio de Janeiro, 1890-1917." *Journal of Latin American Studies*. Vol. 21, No. 2, 1989, pp. 241-266.

Michael L. Conniff. "Brazil's Populist Republic and Beyond", in *Populism in Latin America*, ed. Michael L. Conniff, The University of Alabama Press, 1999.

Mill, John Stuart. *Auguste Comte and Positivism*. Cosimo Classics, 2009.

Mintz, Sidney W. *Sweetness and power: the place of sugar in modern history*. Penguin Books, 1986.

Mourão, Tania Fontenele; Oliveira, Monica Ferreira Gaspar. *Poeira e Batom no Planalto Central: 50 Mulheres na Construção de Brasília*. Athalaia Grafica e Editora, 2010.

Mumford, Eric. *The CIAM Discourse on Urbanism, 1928-1960*. The MIT Press, 2002.

Mumford, Lewis. *Myth of the Machine: Technics and Human Development*. Mariner Books, 1971.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects*. Mariner Books, 1968.

Munshi, Indra. "Patrick Geddes: Sociologist, Environmentalist and Town Planner." *Economic and Political Weekly* 35, no. 6 (February 5, 2000): 485-491.

Nachman, Robert G. "Positivism, Modernism, and the Middle Class in Brazil." *Hispanic American Historical Review*. Vol. 57, No.1, 1977.

Needell, Jeffrey D. "The Revolta Contra Vacina of 1904: the Revolt against 'Modernization' in Belle-Epoque Rio de Janeiro." *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, Vol. 67, No. 2, 1987, pp. 233-269.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Identity, Race, Gender, and Modernity in the Origins of Gilberto Freyre's Oeuvre." *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 100, no. 1 (Feb., 1995), pp.51-77.

Nelson, Daniel. *Frederick W. Taylor and the Rise of Scientific Management*. University of Wisconsin Press, 1980.

Neto, Lira. *Getulio (1882-1930) Dos anos de formação a conquista do poder*. Companhia das Letras, 2012.

Niemeyer, Oscar. "Clearing Brasilia." *Perspecta*, Vol. 34 (2003), pp. 91-93.

Nooteboom, Cees, Martino Stierli, and Iwan Baan. *Brasilia - Chandigarh: Living with Modernity*. Lars Muller Publishers, 2010.

Nunes, Zita. *Cannibal Democracy: Race and Representation in the Literature of the Americas*. University of Minnesota Press, 2008.

Ortner, Sherry B. "Gender Hegemonies." *Cultural Critique*, no. 14 (December 1, 1989): 35-80.

Pamuk, Orhan. *Istanbul: Memories and the City*. 1st Vintage Intl. Edition, July 2006 ed. Vintage, 2006.

Peixoto-Mehrtens, Cristina. *Urban Space and National Identity in Early Twentieth Century São Paulo, Brazil: Crafting Modernity*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Persons, Stow. *Ethnic Studies at Chicago, 1905-45*. University of Illinois Press, 1987.

Pimentel, Antônio Martins de Azevedo. "Histórico da mudança da capital federal." *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro*. Rio de Janeiro, tomo LXXIII, parte 1, 1910.

Pinto, Céli Regina Jardim. *Uma História Do Feminismo No Brasil*. Avail, 2003.

Pinsky, Carla Bessanezi; Pedro, Joana Maria. *Nova Historia das Mulheres*. Editora Contexto, 2012.

Pires, Lucas Rodrigues de Motta. *O Brasil de Juscelino Kubitschek*. Editora Landy, 2006.

Prakash, Gyan, and Kevin M. Kruse. *The Spaces of the Modern City: Imaginaries, Politics, and Everyday Life*. Princeton University Press, 2008.

Priore, Mary Del. *História das mulheres no Brasil*. 7th ed. [São Paulo Brazil]: Editora Contexto ;Editora Unesp Fundação, 2009.

Rebhun, L. A. "Sexuality, Color, and Stigma Among Northeast Brazilian Women" In *Medical Anthropology Quarterly*, New Series, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Jun, 2004) pp. 183-199.

Ribeiro, Gustavo Lins. *O Capital da Esperança: A Experiência dos Trabalhadores na Construção de Brasília*. Editora UnB, 2008.

Rio, Vicente Del, and Prof. William Siembieda. *Contemporary Urbanism in Brazil: Beyond Brasília*. University Press of Florida, 2010.

Risman, Barbara J. "Gender as a Social Structure: Theory Wrestling with Activism." *Gender and Society* 18, no. 4 (2004): 429-450.

Roche, Roberta Senechal de la. "Collective Violence as Social Control" in *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 11 No. 1 (Mar.1996), pp.97-128.

Rohter, Larry. *Brazil on the Rise: The Story of a Country Transformed*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Romano, Silvio. *O evolucionismo e o Positivismo no Brasil*. Nabu Press, 2010.

Rose, R. S. *One of the Forgotten Things: Getulio Vargas and Brazilian Social Control, 1930-1954*. Greenwood Press, 2000.

Russel-Wood, A.J.R. *The Portuguese Empire 1415-1808: a World on the Move*. The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.

Rykwert, Joseph. *The Seduction of Place: The History and Future of Cities*. Vintage, 2002.

Samuel, Flora. "A Profane Annunciation: The Representation of Sexuality at Ronchamp." In *Journal of Architectural Education* , Vol. 53, No.2 (Nov. 1999). Pp. 74-90.

Santos, Cecilia Macdowell. *Women's Police Stations. Gender, Violence, and Justice in Sao Paulo, Brazil*. Palgrave, Macmillan, 2005.

Santos, Martha S. *Cleansing Honor with Blood. Masculinity, Violence, and Power in the Backlands of Northeast Brazil, 1845-1889*. Stanford University Press, 2012.

Santos, Samuel Martins dos. *Paradoxo da Primeira República no Brasil*. Jurua Editora, 2008.

Santos, Cecilia MacDowell. *Women's Police Stations: Gender, Violence, and Justice in Sao Paulo, Brazil*. First Edition. Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.

Santos, Milton. *Brasil território e sociedade no início do século 21*. 13<sup>th</sup> edition, Editora Record, 2011

Scheper-Hughes, Nancy. *Death without weeping: the violence of everyday life in Brazil*. University of California Press, 1992.

Schneekloth, Lynda H. "The Frontier is Our Home." In *Journal of Architectural Education* Vol. 49, no. 4 (May, 1996), pp. 210-225.

Schwartz, Stuart B. *Sugar plantations in the formation of Brazilian society: Bahia, 1550-1835* Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Schippers, Mimi. "Recovering the feminine other: masculinity, femininity, and gender hegemony." In *Theory and Society*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Feb. 2007), pp. 85-102.

Scott, James C. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. Yale University Press, 1999.

Scott, Joan W. "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis." *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (December 1, 1986): 1053-1075.

Scott, Joan Wallach. *Gender and the Politics of History*. Revised. Columbia University Press, 1999.

———. "History in Crisis: The Others' Side of the Story." *The American Historical Review* 94, no. 3 (June 1, 1989): 680-692.

———. *The Fantasy of Feminist History*. Duke University Press Books, 2011.

Sennett, Richard. *The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of Cities*. W. W. Norton & Company, 1992.

———. *The Fall of Public Man*. W. W. Norton & Company, 1992.

Senra, Nelson de Castro. *Veredas de Brasília as Expedições Geográficas, em Busca de um Sonho*. IBGE, 2010.

Sheldon Maram. "Juscelino Kubitschek and the 1960 Presidential Election." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 24, no. 1 (February 1, 1992): 123-145.

———. "Juscelino Kubitschek and the Politics of Exuberance, 1956-1961." *Luso-Brazilian Review* 27, no. 1 (July 1, 1990): 31-45.

Silva, Ernesto. *História de Brasília: um sonho, uma esperança, uma realidade*. Coordenada-Editora de Brasília, 1971.

Simmel, Georg. *Georg Simmel on Individuality and Social Forms*. University Of Chicago Press, 1972.

Sisson, Rachel; Jackson, Elizabeth A. "Rio de Janeiro, 1875-1945: the shaping of a new urban order." *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, Vol. 21, Brazil Theme Issue, 1995, pp. 138-155.



Skidmore, Thomas. *The politics of military rule in Brazil 1964-85*. Oxford University Press, 1988.

\_\_\_\_\_, Thomas E. *Black into White: Race and Nationality in Brazilian Thought*. Duke University Press, 1993.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Brazil: Five Centuries of Change*. 2nd ed. Oxford University Press, USA, 2009.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Politics in Brazil 1930-1964: An Experiment in Democracy*. Updated. Oxford University Press, USA, 2007.

Skidmore, Thomas, Peter Smith, and James Green. *Modern Latin America*. 7th ed. Oxford University Press, USA, 2009.

Snyder, David E. "Alternate Perspectives on Brasilia." *Economic Geography* 40, no. 1 (January 1, 1964): 34-45.

Soares, Mozart Pereira. *O Positivismo no Brasil*. Age Editora, 1998.

Souza, Julia Filet-Abreu. "Paid Domestic Service in Brazil" In *Latin American Perspectives*, Vol. 7, No. 1, Brazil: Class Interests and the State, 1980, pp. 35-63.

Stella, Pietro; Drury, John. *Don Bosco: religious outlook and spirituality*. Salesiana Publishers, 1996.

Stepan, Leys. *The Hour of Eugenics: Race, Gender, and Nation in Latin America*. Cornell University Press, 1996.

Stephenson, Glenn V. "Two Newly-Created Capitals: Islamabad and Brasilia." *The Town Planning Review* 41, no. 4 (October 1, 1970): 317-332.

Tamanini, L. *Brasília: memória da construção*. 2nd ed. Brasília DF: Projecto Editorial, 2003.

Telles, Edward E. *Race in Another America: The Significance of Skin Color in Brazil*. Princeton University Press, 2004.

Théry, Hervé. "Brasília. De la capitale à la métropole?" *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'histoire*, no. 81 (January 1, 2004): 93-105.

Tinsman, Heidi. "A Paradigm of Our Own: Joan Scott in Latin American History" In *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 113, No. 5 (December 2008), pp. 1344-1345.

Turner, Frederick Jackson. *The Frontier in American History*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2011. p.2.

Twine, France Winddance. *Racism in a Racial Democracy; the Maintenance of White Supremacy in Brazil*. Rutgers University Press, 2000.

Underwood, David. *Oscar Niemeyer and Brazilian Free-Form Modernism*. 1st ed. George Braziller, 1994.

Vainfas, Ronaldo. *Trópico dos Pecados: Moral, Sexualidade e Inquisição no Brasil*. Editora Campus, 1989.

Vale, Lawrence. *Architecture, Power and National Identity*. 2nd ed. Routledge, 2008.

Vianna, Adriana R. B; Carrara, Sergio. "Sexual Politics and Sexual Rights in Brazil: A Case Study" In *The Politics of Sexuality in Latin America*. Ed. Ed. Javier Corrales and Mario Pecheny, 122-134. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2010..

Vianna, Helio. *História do Brasil*. Editora Melhoramentos, 1967.

Vleet, Krista E. Van. "The Intimacies of Power: Rethinking Violence and Affinity in the Bolivian Andes" In *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (Aug. 2002) pp. 567-601.

Warren, Dean. *With Broadax and Firebrand: the Destruction of the Brazilian Atlantic Forest*. University of California Press, 1997.

Watson, Sophie. *Accommodating Inequality*. Allen & Unwin, 1988.

———. *City Publics: The (Dis)enchantments of Urban Encounters*. 1st ed. Routledge, 2006.

———. *Housing and Homelessness: A Feminist Perspective*. 1st ed. Routledge, 1986.

Watson, Sophie, and Katherine Gibson. *Postmodern Cities and Spaces*. Wiley-Blackwell, 1995.

Weber, Nicholas Fox. *Le Corbusier – A Life.* Alfred A. Knopf, 2008.

Weinstein, Barbara. *For Social Peace in Brazil: Industrialists and the Remaking of the Working Class in Sao Paulo, 1922-1964*. The University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

———. "Developing Inequality" In *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 113, No. 1 (Feb., 2008) pp.1-18.

Williams, Daryle. *Culture Wars in Brazil: The First Vargas Regime, 1930–1945*. Duke University Press Books, 2001.

Wilson, Elizabeth. *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder, and Women*. University of California Press, 1992.

Winant, Howard. "Race and Race Theory". *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 26 (2000), pp. 169-185.

Wittig, Monique. *The Straight Mind: And Other Essays*. Beacon Press, 1992.

Wolfe, Joel. *Autos and Progress: The Brazilian Search for Modernity*. Oxford University Press, 2010.

———. *Working Women, Working Men: Sao Paulo & the Rise of Brazil's Industrial Working Class, 1900–1955*. Duke University Press Books, 1998.

Wolff, Kurt H. *The Sociology Of Georg Simmel*. Nabu Press, 2011.

Zaknic, Ivan. "Le Corbusier's Epiphany on Mount Athos" In *Journal of Architectural Education* Vol. 43, No. 4 (1990) pp.27-36.